



FANNY SCHOTT

(From a drawing by Rossetti, perhaps a preliminary study  
for the painting, "Lady with the Fan.")

# THREE ROSSETTIS

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

TO AND FROM

DANTE GABRIEL, CHRISTINA, WILLIAM

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

JANET CAMP TROXELL



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To  
G. M. T.  
*in gratitude*





## PREFACE

THERE is little place for any further comment on Dante Gabriel Rossetti or his friends: it is only when something actually new comes to light that there can be any justification for another book. In my own collecting I have been fortunate enough to come into possession of interesting material connected with the Rossettis which I am presenting with only the remarks necessary to make it comprehensible to the reader.

All the letters not otherwise attributed are in my possession. I am indebted to Professor Richard L. Purdy for allowing me to use hitherto unpublished material in his possession, and to the *Colophon* for permission to reprint the chapter on Howell, a portion of which appeared in its pages; as well as to Hamish Hamilton and Harper and Brothers for quotations from W. Graham Robertson's *Time Was*, published in the United States as *Life Was Worth Living*; to Faber and Faber and the Frederick Stokes Company for quotations from R. H. Wilenski's *John Ruskin*; to Chapman and Hall for quotations from *Thomas Woolner, R.A.: His Life in Letters*. I am deeply obliged to Madame Agresti and Madame Angeli, daughters of William Michael Rossetti, to Miss Henrietta C. Bartlett, Professor Chauncey B. Tinker, and Dr. C. G. Williamson for the interest they have shown.

J. C. T.

New Haven

1937



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## THREE ROSSETTIS





# I

## EARLY LETTERS

DANTE Gabriel Rossetti, at intervals, destroyed all his accumulated correspondence, therefore, letters to him are rare, especially those dealing with the early years of his career. I have obtained a few, some of which were preserved by the foresight of Charles Augustus Howell,<sup>1</sup> who seized them when Rossetti moved from Chatham Place to Cheyne Walk after the death of his wife.

About 1846 Rossetti had come upon two books by Charles Wells, both of which he admired enormously the prose *Stories after Nature*, published anonymously in 1822, and the poetic drama, *Joseph and His Brethren*, published in 1824 under the pseudonym of H. L. Howard. He tried for years to stimulate his friends to a similar enthusiasm, and when in 1870 he wrote to *Notes and Queries* about Ebenezer Jones, he brought in Wells's name as a poet whose claims had been overlooked.<sup>2</sup> Wells was a very eccentric character, one of whose aims in life seemed to be to exercise his influence over others to a morbid degree, a craving which he gratified regardless of means or consequences. Among the friends whom he alienated were Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and John Keats. The last friendship came to an end as the result of a practical joke played on the ailing Tom Keats.<sup>3</sup> Wells had kept up a correspondence with him in the guise of a lady and endeavored to persuade him to go to France to meet his correspondent. The discovery of the fraud had a very serious effect on the victim; John Keats was extremely indignant and broke off all acquaintance with the perpetrator.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See below, Chapter VII

<sup>2</sup> D. G. Rossetti, *Collected Works* (London, 1888), I, 479

<sup>3</sup> W. M. Rossetti, *Praeraphaelite Diaries and Letters* (London, 1900), p. 284

<sup>4</sup> A son of Wells's figured as the hero in a popular song, "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" (T. J. Wise, *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, IV, 140, VI, 115)

Rossetti had hoped to arrange a meeting with Wells when he and Holman Hunt went to the Continent in 1849,<sup>5</sup> but the plan fell through.

*St. Pol de Leon*  
*Finistere*  
*France*  
*6 Octr. 1850*

MY DEAR SIR.

I am much flattered [*sic*] by the note Mrs. Wells has handed me in your name.

Mr. Williams<sup>6</sup> faithfully performed the commission you gave him: and it is true that I did not reply to his Letter — That Letter like all that I have received at his hands was characterised by the utmost Kindness and good feeling towards me, but he concluded by observing that he had written me a long letter and that I must not anticipate future correspondence for he had not sufficient leisure — being well aware that so humble an individual as myself could not trespass on occupations so valuable as his are — I acknowledged the justice of his remark by my silence. On the other hand having pursued the path of Literature “with *unprofitable* labour to its grave” — having sown in the sweat of the brain and reaped in the dust and ashes of disappointment — I placed your proposition as the last round at the foot of the ladder of “hopes deferred” and subscribing to the fatalists axiom “if it is to be it will be” anchor’d on your promised arrival in Brittany — which never happened! —

With regard to the Poem in question I shall be glad to forward your Views in any way agreeable to yourself.

I have not yet read the alterations you were so kind as to make,

<sup>5</sup> *Praeraphaelite Diaries and Letters*, p. 222. See also *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters, with a Memoir by William Michael Rossetti* (London, 1895), II, 55.

<sup>6</sup> William Smith Williams, discoverer of Charlotte Brontë’s genius, brother-in-law to Wells, and Lowes Dickinson’s father-in-law.



LIZZIE SIDDAL

(From a drawing by Rossetti.)



but I have no doubt they are judicious and just — I acknowledge to great ignorance and incapacity — nor is it an available excuse for me that I trusted ‘correcting the Press’ to a person whose negligence allow’d the groosiest [*sic*] errors <sup>7</sup> to pass!

I will take the earliest opportunity to transmit you the copy of *Joseph* with such trifling alterations as I may find it necessary to make — such occasions at this distance do not happen every day but you may rely on my sincerity, as well as my entire submission to all your wishes and desires. —

One thing pleases me more than all the rest, it is the frank and kindly tone which characterises your letter to me — to wh. I respond — and acknowledge in these days of surface and shadow — with all my heart.

Believe me respectfully and faithfully

Your obedient huble [*sic*] Servant

CHARLES WELLS

May I apologize for requesting you to Post the enclosed note for Mr. Hazlitt, if you have it not I trust you will have no difficulty in finding his address as he has changed residence since I last wrote to him.

Rossetti’s interest in *Joseph and His Brethren* continued, and in 1860 he wrote to George Meredith, who was then literary adviser to the firm of Chapman and Hall, about a new edition of the book. Rossetti’s idea was to do five etchings and get some other artists each to do a similar number in order to add to its appeal for the general public <sup>8</sup>. This scheme was never put through, and in 1874 Wells became so discouraged by what he considered the lack of recognition of his genius that he burned all his manuscripts. In 1877, two years before Wells’s death, Swinburne edited *Joseph*, and it was finally reissued. A reprint in the *World’s*

<sup>7</sup> “Ignorance” deleted

<sup>8</sup> *Praeraphaelite Diaries and Letters*, p. 218

Classics in 1908 contained an essay by Theodore Watts-Dunton, "Rossetti and Charles Wells."

*Copsham Cottage,  
Esher,  
Surrey.*

MY DEAR ROSSETTI

Pardon my silence. I have been unable to reply fully, and so delayed.

You had better send the Poem to me. I will give it my best attention. If I can recommend it, doubt not that I will do so.

But a poem on a scriptural theme, you know how little chance it has with the British Public, be it never so good. Still your enthusiasm arouses my curiosity, and I may think more hopefully of it when I have read it. At all events, I can spare the author annoyance by reading it first, and taking the responsibility on myself. Illustrations from your hand, will add largely to its chances of sale and *sale* as well as merit, is what we shall have to look to.

As to my own work,<sup>9</sup> you speak too favourably of it. I was unfortunately knocked down by illness during composition; and the 'Weeks' stayed not for me. I fell into slipshod, and had to scuffle on anyhow. The Countess, you see, has only one side of her character to the reader. The action was too quick, continuous: the space too short. It is a comedy, as I have said, and this should explain some of the shortcomings of the work. The writing is atrocious. It is quite destitute of the lumen purpureum which I like to give. How a work without colour, can please you at all, astonishes me. Raikes is abominably vulgar. The idea of him came from the necessity for a contrast to Evan: and this from the title I gave the book, which tied me down. I am so disgusted that I can't even persuade myself to touch it up for the re-issue. The

<sup>9</sup> *Evan Harrington* appeared serially in *Once a Week* from February to October, 1860

nausea is too strong. It must go forth much as it is. But for the question of money, I would quash it altogether.

If I have health the next will be better.

I shall be most happy to make my bow to Mrs Rossetti, when you are pleased to give me warning that I may.

Very faithfully yours

Friday, Novr.

GEORGE MEREDITH <sup>10</sup>

Rossetti had married in May 1860 Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal. Her letters are so few and far between that I give two specimens here, both addressed to her husband, whom she called "Gug," as an affectionate diminutive of Gabriel. This nickname, oddly enough, was used by them in common <sup>11</sup> Like everything else connected with her, these letters reveal very little of her inner feelings and are tinged with melancholy. One might say of her, as of Steele's maids of honor in *The Procession*, "Sadly she charm'd, and dismally she pleas'd."

Lady Burne-Jones received an impression in the earliest days of their acquaintance, which never wore away, of romance and tragedy between her and her husband. "I see her in the little upstairs bedroom with its lattice window, to which she carried me when we arrived, and the mass of her beautiful deep-red hair as she took off her bonnet: she wore her hair very loosely fastened up, so that it fell in soft, heavy wings. Her complexion looked as if a rose tint lay beneath the white skin, producing a most soft and delicate pink for the darkest flesh-tone. Her eyes were of a kind of golden brown — agate-colour is the only word I can think of to describe them — and wonderfully luminous in all Gabriel's drawings of her and in the type she created in his mind this is to be seen. The eyelids were deep, but without any languor or drowsiness, and had the peculiarity of seeming scarcely to veil the light in her eyes when she was looking down." <sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> After Mrs Rossetti's death in 1862, Meredith became, for a brief period, one of the tenants of Rossetti's Cheyne Walk house.

<sup>11</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 177-178

<sup>12</sup> Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (London, 1904), I, 208



But better than any elaborate description is Brown's brief entry in his diary on October 6, 1854 "Saw Miss Siddal, looking thinner and more deathlike and more beautiful and more ragged than ever."<sup>13</sup>

[June 1861] *Friday morning*

MY DEAREST GUG

It is indeed a dreadful thing about poor Mrs Wells. All people who are at all happy or useful seem to be taken away It will be a fearful blow to her husband for she must have been the head of the firm and most useful to him.<sup>14</sup>

If you can come down here<sup>15</sup> on Saturday evening I shall be very glad indeed I want you to do something to the figure I have been trying to paint on the wall But I fear it must all come out for I am too blind and sick to see what I am about<sup>16</sup>

Hoping you will not allow spontock to be too much worried

I remain

Your affectionate

LIZZIE

*Red House*

*Upton*

[October 1861?]<sup>17</sup>

MY DEAR GABRIEL

I am most sorry to think of your picture going at that low price but of course there was nothing else to be done I wish you would

<sup>13</sup> W M Rossetti, *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism* (London, 1899), p 19

<sup>14</sup> Mrs Wells, who died in June 1861, was the wife of H T Wells, a Royal Academy portrait painter, and the sister of a great friend of Rossetti's, G P Boyce She was herself a very talented artist

<sup>15</sup> Probably Red House, with Mr and Mrs William Morris

<sup>16</sup> She had been delivered of a stillborn child, May 2, 1861

<sup>17</sup> Lizzie was staying at Red House in October 1861 (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 169) Charles Ricketts in the *Observer*, October 14, 1928, says that her presence at Red House was described to him as that of a delicate wraith "appearing without a word at dinner, rising — gliding away silent and unobserved as she had come — a ghost in the house of the living"

put aside or send on to me the money for those knives, as I do not wish those people to think I am unable to pay for them. The price of the knives is two shillings each.

Your affectionate

LIZZIE

The nearest approach to an intimate friend that Lizzie ever found was in Mrs. Ford Madox Brown, the artist's second wife. It was to the Browns' house that she fled after quarrels with Rossetti, and they always provided a refuge for her in trouble or illness.

When Gabriele Rossetti, the father of Dante Gabriel, died in 1854, Brown wrote a characteristic letter of condolence, which, like the other letters in this chapter, is now published for the first time. The basis of the friendship between Brown and Rossetti was very curious. Brown had the kindest heart in the world, but he was crotchety and inclined to take offense very easily. Rossetti offended him continually, he made demands on Brown at all seasons, personal, financial, and artistic, but Brown accepted these terms and remained his steadfast friend all his life. He reserved only the right to be extremely angry with Rossetti, and asserted it frequently. Conservative and respectable as Brown was, his susceptibilities were often outraged by Rossetti's utter disregard of appearances — when Rossetti stopped at a potato stall on the pavement in Holborn, bought two pennyworth of roasted potatoes, and ate them as he walked along, Brown, in high dudgeon, walked parallel with him on the other side of the street, in order not to be dishonored by his companionship.<sup>18</sup>

Brown was intimately connected with the rather strange little group that followed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and is often confused with them. In this set were William Morris and Burne-Jones, the latter of whom wrote about 1856. "We know Rossetti

<sup>18</sup> Hall Caine, *Recollections of Rossetti* (London, 1928), p. 174.

now as a daily friend, and we know Browning too, who is the greatest poet alive, and we know Arthur Hughes, and Woolner, and Madox Brown — Madox Brown is a lark!<sup>1</sup> I asked him the other day if I wasn't very old to begin painting, and he said, 'Oh, no! there was a man I knew who began older, by the bye, he cut his throat the other day,' so I ask no more about men who begin late."<sup>19</sup>

*Thursday*

*27 April [1854]*

MY DEAR GABRIEL

So the poor Governor has gone the way of all flesh, an other [*sic*] leave taking, this life is nothing else but a succession of takings leave, relations, friends, places, connexions, habits, loves, and plans of action one after the other we take leave of, till the thinking man gets used to it, while the man who doesn't, don't, and this is the difference — I suppose you had expected the event for a good while, at least it was to be expected from the state your poor father was in. Pray write and let me know how your mother is when you have time — you do not tell me where you are nor have I heard yet the address of the House your Mother and brother have. I have not been able to master energy enough to come to Blackfriars yet — but hope soon to see you somehow. I send you back Hunts letter which I forgot.

Pray offer my compliments and sincere condolences to your Mother and family and take for yourself the same love from me and Emma.<sup>20</sup>

Yours sincerely [*sic*]

FORD MADOX BROWN

<sup>19</sup> J W Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London, 1899), I, 108

<sup>20</sup> His wife

I do not know the date of the next letter, and it is of no very great interest, but Lizzie, Gabriel, and Brown seem to be playing characteristic roles.

MY DEAR BROWN

LIZZIE dropped somewhere one of her ivory bracelets last night. Was it dropped at your house? If not, may I give you a piece of trouble. That is, to send the annexed advertmt to the nearest printing office and get it posted as soon as possible about Kentish Town &c If you will pay the reward, I will reimburse you when I see you, but I daresay there will be no call.

Yours affectionately

D. G. ROSSETTI

In 1860 Ruskin added to his many favors to Rossetti by financing his translations from the Italian, and the next two letters are concerned with the book, *The Early Italian Poets*. The first is from Mrs. Gaskell, the author of *Cranford*, to whom Gabriel had sent the proof sheets, and from whom he hoped to get a favorable notice in the *Cornhill*, to which she was a frequent contributor. The second is from Thomas Keightley, an Irishman, the author of *The Fairy Mythology*, who was a devout believer in Gabriele Rossetti's theories about Dante. He settled in a London suburb, and the Rossettis saw a good deal of him and of his nephew, Alfred Chaworth Lyster.

*Back End,<sup>21</sup> Auchencairn,  
Near Dumfries, N. B. Friday*

DEAR MR. ROSSETTI,

The real address is Bank End, only twice over my pen would make Back End instead, which signifies the less as we leave here (alas the day) for Manchester 42 Plymouth Grove on Monday

<sup>21</sup> Crossed out

next, so I hope you will take all this long explanation of the error in the direction, as a proof of my very preraphaelite love of accuracy.

Thank you very much for your proof sheets I do know the *Vita Nuova* a little, — as much by Mr. Norton's translation (have you seen it? in the *Atlantic Magazine*?) as anything, but I have known the original in a sort of way for some time, and it is well, for it stands as a centre to all the other poems. You would receive I hope M. de Circourts<sup>22</sup> Papers on Cavalcanti<sup>23</sup> and Cino da Pistoja<sup>24</sup> by yesterday's post? I did not like to delay them for the chance of my letter today, — nor do I like to delay this enclosed letter of M. de Circourt's for one or two criticisms which I should like to make if I may on what appear to me to be slightly defective lines in the Sonnets. I like your translations so very much that I want them to be perfect, — and I think the reconsideration of a word or two here and there, which cause the line to strike upon my ear as unrhythmical, would be worth while. I remember such a pretty story dear Mrs. Wordsworth told me of her husband, — which I think emboldens me to stick my two or three fancied defects in words on a bit of paper, enclosed Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth and his sister Dora were all living at Grasmere, 5 or 6 miles away from Ambleside, the nearest post town, and they were very poor and lived in a cottage, and in the mornings Wordsworth wrote, and Miss Wordsworth cooked, and helped Mrs. Wordsworth to make the beds and nurse, for they had no servant, and they had, I think — *one* little child, — and then they dined, and then they locked up the house, and walked, carrying the child among them And one day a proof came of one of the lyrical ballads, — postage to be paid back, — and postage from Ambleside to London 13*d*. In the afternoon the three

<sup>22</sup> Comte Adolphe M. P. de Circourt, 1801-1879

<sup>23</sup> Italian poet, c. 1250-1300, Dante's first friend (*Vita nuova*)

<sup>24</sup> Guittoncino de' Sinibaldi, Italian poet, 1270-1336 (*Vita nuova*)

Red House  
Upton.

My dear Gabriel

I am most sorry  
to think of your picture  
going at that low price  
but of course there was  
nothing else to be done.  
I wish you would put  
aside or send on to me  
the money for those  
Kimonos, as I do not wish  
those people to think I am  
unable to pay for them.  
The price of the Kimono  
is two shillings each.

Yours affectionately  
Lizzie

LETTER FROM LIZZIE SIDDAL TO ROSSETTI



walked to Ambleside to post and pay for the proof, — then they walked home, and at tea Wordsworth who had been silent for some time culminated into an exclamation of how bad some one word in the sent-off ballad was, — did not answer to his meaning a bit. So he and Miss Wordsworth set off *again* to Ambleside, — got in after the Postmistress had gone to bed, for they keep early hours there, — stated the case, — they are good friendly people those Lake Country folk, — got the letter out of the postbox, — for you see they could not afford a second 13d, had a candle lighted, sent the Post Mistress to bed, — sate up till the mail went out at 4 A.M., — and as the guard was blowing his horn, *the* word came into Wordsworth's head — (or Dora's) and it was written down, sent off, candle put out, and they trudged back to breakfast at Grasmere with merry hearts. Do, if you think M de Circourt can give you any help, write to him. He is a member of the Institut, so I always direct to him there. He is Genevese, and had been ambassador up and down in former days, and married a Russian lady, — they are neither of them young, — two or three years ago she set herself on fire and was dreadfully burnt, and then there came out such beautiful patience and heroic cheerfulness out of the Russo Parisian lady of fashion, that it was quite a lesson against judging — And he is a *thoroughly* kind, and very accomplished man. I am *very* glad you like Adam Bede, — do read 'Janets Repentance' in Scenes of Clerical Life, — by the same author. But the man or woman is a noble creature, whoever he or she be, — I thought I knew who wrote it, when I saw yr. brother, but I believe I don't.

I have not seen Tennyson's new poems, — but I have smelt oh *such* honeysuckle today, and you have only smelt the Thames.

Yours very truly

E. C. GASKELL

My daughters' kindest regards.



*Belvedere Kent*  
*Xmas Day, 1861*

DEAR GABRIEL,

I have received and thank you for your very handsome volume. As far as I can judge without having the originals your translations are most admirable. They have all the freedom and ease and I even may add, idiomism of original compositions. They *must* procure you fame and I wish I could add profit, but that I fear is out of the question.

But, you degenerate, you seem to regard the *Vita Nuova* as a real autobiography! Now I not only think but am certain that your father actually demonstrated the contrary. In my mind Beatrice, Laura, Mandetta <sup>25</sup> and all the rest of the bevy are as ideal as Queen Mab.

William and Christina have come hither. Are we never to see you?

Believe me, dear Gabriel

Most truly yours

THOS. KEIGHTLEY

*D. G. Rossetti, Esq*

Rossetti's literary labors during the next two years included his work on the life of Blake, which the sudden death of Alexander Gilchrist in November 1861 left unfinished. His interest in Blake had begun very early, and when in 1847 an attendant in the British Museum named Palmer offered to sell him a manuscript book by Blake, filled with prose and verse and designs, Rossetti was extremely eager to buy it. He had not the ten shillings asked by Palmer for the book, but William Rossetti supplied them, and Gabriel began at once to copy out the poetry and prose. He found the most outspoken jeers against such painters as Correggio,

<sup>25</sup> Cavalcanti transferred his homage from Joan to Mandetta (*Vita nuova*).

Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Reynolds, and Gainsborough, which were balm to his soul and gave an impulse to the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

In 1860, when Gilchrist was beginning his life of Blake, Rossetti entrusted the manuscript book to him and helped him with many suggestions and interpretations, to some of which Gilchrist refers in this letter:

*Mr. Mott's, Abinger College  
Near Dorking  
Sat. 31 Aug 1861.*

MY DEAR ROSSETTI,

I have not had an opportunity of answering your note of Tuesday till now I am much obliged to you for your version of the *Auguries of Innocence* which I think a real amendment. It wants this kind of treatment, and from your having taken the trouble to give the same I presume you agree with me in thinking the poem one of Blake's more remarkable effusions By your transpositions you have very much brought out the general pertinence and coherence of the thing. Your suggestions as to which of the other poems to publish tally I think with my own notions. And a confirmatory opinion strengthens one's own judgment in such cases

You can give me the M.S. and small coin when I next call, which will be next week perhaps — I shall not be able to come up on Monday, to witness Nogg and his grand example of deportment again, shall stay here another week, I think and then return to Chelsea, where my wife and children will rejoin me I hope about the 14th.

Could you recommend me a good man for a Medieval tombstone (for Palmer's son)? as I do not know of one and have offered to see to the matter.

With best wishes for the Llandaff <sup>26</sup> picture and for extrication from the [*illegible*] botherations,

Yours very faithfully,

ALEX GILCHRIST

*D G Rossetti Esq.*

It is interesting to realize that as early as 1855 Rossetti's reputation was such that he received the following proposal I suppose his correspondent to have been Aurelio Saffi, who held a chair at Oxford University for instruction in Italian. He had known Rossetti, senior, for many years, and through him met Gabriel, who had sent him some of his Italian translations in manuscript.

The postscript on the last page of the letter is in Rossetti's hand and is obviously addressed to Ruskin

*Look at last page* D. G. R.<sup>27</sup>

*Manchester 12, Novr.*

*1855*

MY DEAR MR. ROSETTI [*sic*]

Mr. Scott <sup>28</sup> Principal of Owen's College,<sup>29</sup> and a member of the Royal Institution have [*sic*] told me that next January they wish to have, in the same Institution, a course of six Lectures on Art (especially Italian Art) relative to the period extending between the XIII and the XVI centuries. Mr. Scott, who read, some time ago, several translations of the earlier Italian Poets, admires, through them, your Literary talent, and knows at the same time what an artist you are. He should be happy if you would have no objection to assume the task of delivering here these Lectures on Art, and would be glad to know it previously.

I said to him, that having the pleasure of being personally ac-

<sup>26</sup> Rossetti's triptych, "The Seed of David," altarpiece for Llandaff Cathedral

<sup>27</sup> In Rossetti's autograph

<sup>28</sup> Alexander John Scott, 1805-1866

<sup>29</sup> Founded by Robert Owen, Socialist and philanthropist

quainted with you, I could take the liberty of writing to you on the matter, which, accordingly, I am happy to do. The more so, that I feel convinced, your lofty and religious conception of Art would give your Lectures the character of a true, moral function to be fulfilled in a town, where there is at work a prevalent tendency towards material objects.

This moral influence of the aesthetic element on men's mind is here the *votum* of the members of the Institution, and especially of Mr Scott, who is, as you know perhaps, a superior and noble hearted man.

He asks me to apologize on his part for the short time allowed to the work, but this is a further reason why they are anxious to trust it to a person perfectly acquainted with the subject, as you are.

An early answer will oblige me much — Address, please, your letter as follows

A. SAFFI  
Halliwell Lane  
Cheetham Hill  
Manchester

Care of the Revd. Principal Scott

[*Postscript*]

DEAR R. I've of course answered this in the negative, not being fit for it. I send it you, lest there should be the least chance (as I know your wish to spread right views on art just now) of their obtaining a lecture from you at Manchester, which no doubt they'd reckon the best of all luck. Of course I've said as yet no word of showing you the letter, in my answer to Mr. Saffi.

I musn't forget the Browning *errata*, which are at the end of his note enclosed. I did most strangely forget yesterday in hurry to get your Dictum on *Lippo Lippi* and the others of his art-poems,

which seem to me perfection Miss Heaton <sup>30</sup> has kindly written wanting another drawing Depend on the *device* soon, if I can manage it satisfactorily.

Yours affectionately  
D. G. R.

The next letter must have been written in 1856, as that was the year in which Holman Hunt's "Scapegoat" was exhibited. The writer, Richard Doyle, was an artist and caricaturist, who illustrated Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* in 1851 and later (1853-1855) Thackeray's *The Newcomes*. In 1854, when the old Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood tried to get up a sketching club, they asked Doyle to join them. The Marchioness of Waterford and the Hon. Mrs. Boyle (E. V. B.) <sup>31</sup> were also invited to be members, since Rossetti said, "The two ladies are great in design." <sup>32</sup> The plan, however, fell through.

*Stafford Club, Albemarle St.*  
*May 12th. [1856]*

MY DEAR ROSSETTI,

Herewith is Ruskin's pamphlet [*sic*], which I carried off on Saturday, but without 'malice aforethought.' I was sorry a friend accosted me just as we were making the circuit of the room together, but it was not my intention to speak to him for more than a few moments, and when I looked round again you were gone. Finding an [*sic*] needle in a bottle of hay would certainly be an easier process than recovering a lost companion in *that* crowd. And so after a vain effort I left without restoring the 'notes' to its owner.

<sup>30</sup> Miss Heaton bought many of Rossetti's works under the guidance of John Ruskin. Her home was in Leeds.

<sup>31</sup> Eleanor Vere Boyle, wife of the Rev. Hon. Richard C. Boyle, amateur painter and author of children's books.

<sup>32</sup> *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott* (London, 1892), I, 326.

A change has certainly come over Ruskin — So much praise, and so little fault-finding. I cannot agree, however, with much he says of the 'Scapegoat' The sunlit mountain range seems to me as truthful and beautiful as poetic Landscape art can be.

Most Sincerely yours

RICHARD DOYLE

Alexander Munro is important in Rossetti history because of the fact that Rossetti confided to him the significance of the initials PRB, and Munro was responsible, by his breach of this confidence,<sup>33</sup> for the storm that broke over the heads of the members of the Brotherhood when the art critics realized that PRB stood for Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He was a sculptor, and had been associated with the artists and amateurs who worked in the Union Building at Oxford. In 1848 William Rossetti wrote to Gabriel that he thought he had just seen Munro in Brighton, but Gabriel replied, "Munro has *not* been to Brighton, but the other day in London, he fancied he saw *you* on the top of an omnibus. As he is a Scotchman, this is dangerous, or rather encouraging. There can be no doubt that one at least is to die. Pray to God it may be you." <sup>34</sup>

*61 Upper Belgrave Place*

MY DEAR ROSSETTI

I hope you have got rid of yr. late ailment and have now got settled in Chatham Place. The Dante group will be sent you as soon as its mould can give a cast — it takes some weeks to get properly seasoned — but I hope to have yours out in a month, — or by Xmas and so you'll look upon it as a Xmas box — you can't receive it with half the pleasure I have in giving it you my Dear

<sup>33</sup> He told a journalist, who made a paragraph of the information in the *Illustrated London News*

<sup>34</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 42.

Rossetti, for I am most happy to think that you like it well enough to have it bye [*sic*] you and I hope that at some other Xmas time you'll get its companion — which I'm determined will be much a better thing — the *Faust and Margaret* which I must do next —

When shall you be in this way? I shall have three or four casts out at the same time and if you're near here three weeks hence or thereabouts you could select the best — if not I shall do so and take it over to your new place which I hope you like the more that you're in it — kind remembrances to your brother William and Goodbye yrs. ever and aye

ALEX MUNRO

*D. G. Rossetti Esq.*

Lady Waterford had expressed a wish to John Ruskin in June 1855 to see Rossetti paint in water color, and Rossetti wrote to his mother on July first that "an astounding event" was impending in the form of a visit from "such a swell and such a stunner."<sup>35</sup> Evidently an arrangement had been made at this time for him to give Lady Waterford some instruction, but Ford Madox Brown says in his diary for July 13, 1855, that he and Rossetti concocted a letter to her from Rossetti declining to give her lessons "à domicile."<sup>36</sup> This must be the answer to his note:

Lady Waterford presents her compliments to Mr Rossetti [*sic*] and is extremely obliged to him for his note — She is sorry to find that she must for the present give up what she had looked forward to with so much pleasure, the assistance and advice of Mr Rossetti

<sup>35</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 140

<sup>36</sup> *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism*, p 38

on matters of art. — But Lady W hopes that at some future time he will kindly allow her to revisit his studio and remind him of his having given her the hope that he would direct her studies, which *do* need being directed into a better channel than they are at present — and are likely to remain for sometime, in her ignorance of means to attain what she cannot but hope she may one day aspire to accomplish, that is one *good* picture or drawing, *thoroughly* right and not a half accomplished and half finished sketch. —

*Claridge's Hotel, July 16. [1855]*

In 1866 a project was formed to raise money for the benefit of George Cruickshank. John Skelton <sup>37</sup> said he thought that Rossetti wrote the privately issued appeal, the president was John Ruskin, who by December 1866 had given Cruickshank about £600 from the subscriptions.<sup>38</sup> Thackeray wrote. "Before the turn of the century was in its teens, we believe that George Cruickshank was amusing the public Is there no way in which the country could acknowledge the long services and brave career of such a friend and benefactor?" And Rossetti (if it were Rossetti) continued "There can be few men who on reaching, as George Cruickshank has now reached, the advanced age of seventy-three, can look back with a clearer consciousness of great abilities used in more directions than one, laboriously, fruitfully, honourably, and well" Rossetti received many letters in reply to the circular, some of which have a special interest, such as the note from Dr Acland with its reference to Lizzie Siddal. He was an intimate friend of Ruskin's, and in 1855 it was arranged that Lizzie should stay in Oxford under Acland's care at Ruskin's expense

<sup>37</sup> *Blackwood's*, February 1893

<sup>38</sup> W M Rossetti, *Rossetti Papers*, 1862-1870 (London, 1903), p 198



Ruskin sent the following letter to Rossetti before her departure

DEAR ROSSETTI

Please deliver enclosed to Miss S. and if she *will* be ready by Saturday merely send a line to Dr Acland

Broad St

Oxford,

saying she is really coming and by what train

I am still very unwell, or would write more I hope they do what they can for you out there

Ever yours JR

Best regards to your brother.

Lizzie was shown every attention and kindness by the doctor and his family His diagnosis was that her lungs were nearly all right, but the chief danger lay "in mental power long pent up and lately overtaxed" <sup>39</sup>

*Oxford April 25, 1866*

MY DEAR MR ROSSETTI

I should wish to do anything you desire, especially for an Artist, and for such an one as G Cruickshank. But such are the demands on my purse that I cannot give you more than a guinea and that will not entitle me to be on your committee. If it does I shall be too happy

I often think of you — I look at the Photograph *she* gave me of some sheep, now so faded that you can scarce see the outlines even of the flock.

Ever yours,

H W. ACLAND

Henry Chorley, who offers a pleasant apology in the next letter, was a music critic, at this time on the staff of the *Athenaeum*. If

<sup>39</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 142.

Rossetti expressed his feeling about music at the Brownings', it might have been difficult for a music lover to remain civil. Rossetti's assistant, H T Dunn, says the only notion Rossetti had of *Fidelio* after hearing it sung was that of "a man who was taken out of prison, where he had been for a couple of days without food, and who, when a loaf of bread was given to him, instead of eating it like [*sic*] any starving man would do, burst out into a long solo over it lasting for 10 minutes — which he thought was obviously absurd!"<sup>40</sup> After Handel's *Messiah* he said that it had seemed to him that everyone got up and shouted at him as loudly as possible.

13 Eaton Place West  
S W.  
April 30th 1866

DEAR SIR —

I have turned in my mind the compliment you paid me on Saturday evening but, on consideration, find that I cannot accept it. I regret this the less, from feeling that my name would add no real weight to your committee

I will see what I can do in another form, but my Exchequer has never been so empty as at the time present and my health is so bad that my power of working is seriously curtailed.

I have a dim recollection of having made myself very disagreeable at the Brownings when we met there and if such was the case, feel your courtesy all the more sensibly

Perhaps I may know, when attention can be drawn to your project.

Very sincerely yours  
HENRY F. CHORLEY

<sup>40</sup> H T Dunn, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and His Circle* (London, 1904), pp 28-29

Sir Joseph Noel Paton, the queen's limner in Scotland, was a great admirer of Rossetti's and rendered him a valuable service about 1872 when he sent young William Sharp to him with a letter of introduction. Sharp became one of Rossetti's mainstays in his last years. Sir Joseph was extremely generous in his praise of Rossetti's paintings, even saying of "Dante's Dream," which he saw in the studio in 1881, "Fifty years hence it will be named among the half dozen supreme pictures of the world!"

*33 George Square  
Edinburgh  
April 19, 1866*

MY DEAR ROSSETTI,

I certainly approve of the proposed testimonial to George Cruickshank, and shall have much pleasure in allowing my name to appear on the Committee, and in doing all I can to assist in the realization of the project.

I propose being in London by the end of next week, and am looking forward with anticipations of pleasure to being allowed a brief glimpse of the works now in progress at your *bodega* — For your *work* (and you must pardon the complimentary speech for the sake of its sincerity) has a power over my imagination greater — and has found its way deeper into my heart — than that of any other living hand.

In haste, Sincerely yours

J. NOEL PATON

*D. G. Rossetti Esq*

## II

### RUSKIN AND ROSSETTI

IN MARCH 1853 Rossetti wrote to Ford Madox Brown of Mr. Francis MacCracken, a Belfast shipowner and packing agent, who had previously bought some of Brown's work. "Ruskin has written him some extravagant praises (tho with obtuse accompaniments) upon one of them [the sketches then exhibiting <sup>1</sup>] — I cannot make out which — and MacC[racken] seems excited, wanting it. . ." <sup>2</sup> William Rossetti says this is the first trace he finds of Ruskin in connection with his brother <sup>3</sup> Mr MacCracken was a great admirer of Ruskin (whom he always referred to as "The Graduate"), and when he bought from Rossetti the water color, "Dante Drawing an Angel in Memory of Beatrice," he sent it to Ruskin for his approval. Gabriel wrote to Brown on April 14, 1854, "MacCracken of course sent my drawing to Ruskin, who the other day wrote me an incredible letter about it, remaining mine respectfully (!), and wanting to call I of course stroked him down in my answer, and yesterday he called His manner was more agreeable than I had always expected . . . He seems in a mood to make my fortune " <sup>4</sup> The letter to which Gabriel refers has never been published, and William Michael Rossetti believed that a letter he quotes written May 2, 1854, must be the earliest <sup>5</sup> Here, however, is obviously the actual first it is very much soiled and looks as if Rossetti had carried it about with him folded in a pocket-book.

*Monday 10th, April 1854*

MY DEAR SIR

When I heard of Mr McCracken's intention to ask you to send your drawing to me, I was ashamed to allow him to do so — but

<sup>1</sup> They were "Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante," "Beatrice at a Marriage Feast Denies Dante Her Salutation," and "Rossovestita "

<sup>2</sup> *Praeraphaelite Diaries and Letters*, p. 34

<sup>3</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 179

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism*, p. 1

permitted my shame to be conquered by the strong desire I had to be allowed to have the drawing by me for a day or two, I was quite sure that I should be able at once to write to Mr McCracken that any work of yours was quite *above* having opinions passed upon it, and I have now only to thank you for your condescension in allowing it to be sent to me on such terms — and still more — for the very great delight I have had in keeping it by me for a day or two. I think it a thoroughly glorious work — the most perfect piece of Italy, in the accessory parts, I have ever seen in my life — nor of Italy only — but of marvelous landscape painting. I might perhaps, if we were talking about it, venture to point out one or two little things that appear to me questionable — but I shall write an unqualified expression of admiration to McCracken — and I can only to you — express my earnest hope that you will not allow any feeling of dissatisfaction with your own work to prevent you at anytime — from completing in such development as may be possible — your noble thoughts. I shall call on you in a day or two — hoping you will allow me the privilege of knowing you — and remaining always most faithfully and respectfully yours —

J. RUSKIN

Gabriel was naturally delighted with all this (he was only twenty-five), and his high spirits knew no bounds. He was quite indifferent to Ruskin personally and never regarded him as anything but an outsider, a natural reaction of the creative spirit to the merely critical, and equally natural to one engrossed in his own pursuits towards one who played the role of spectator.

As William Allingham said, "The alliance between Gabriel and Mr. Ruskin certainly had its comic side."<sup>6</sup> It was a side of which one of the parties, at any rate, was conscious. Rossetti did

<sup>6</sup> Francis Bickley, *The Pre-Raphaelite Comedy* (London, 1932), p. 235.

not take Ruskin's pretensions to infallibility quite so seriously as Ruskin himself took them "As he is only half informed about Art," he wrote to Woolner, "anything he says in favour of one's work is of course sure to prove invaluable in a professional way, . . . Oh! Woolner, if one could only find the 'supreme' Carlylian Ignoramus, him who knows positively the least about Art of any living creature — and get *him* to write a pamphlet about one — what a fortune one might make" <sup>7</sup>

This seems, however reprehensible, to have been his attitude towards his benefactor throughout. He writes on May 23, 1854, to Brown, "Gambart wants me to paint him something, so I imagine Ruskin is beginning to bear fruit" <sup>8</sup> In his diary, September 15, 1855, Brown notes, speaking of a night spent at Rossetti's, "... we were merry enough, although, as Gabriel says, Ruskin had been sticking pins into him, as was his wont for a couple of hours every three days." <sup>9</sup>

The following are fair samples of "pin sticking". "Please put a dab of Chinese White into the hole in the cheek and paint it over . . . also, a white-faced bridesmaid in mist behind is very ugly to look at — like a skull or a body in corruption." <sup>10</sup> "Never put raw green into *light* flesh." <sup>11</sup>

Rossetti failed to comply with these instructions, and Ruskin writes a few days later

"I was like to tear everything in the room to pieces at your daubing over the head in that picture, and that it was no use to me now till you have painted it in again. . . . You have deprived me of a great pleasure by your absurdity. I never, so long as I live, will trust you to do anything again, out of my sight" <sup>12</sup>

"I was put out today, as you must have seen, for I can't hide it when I am vexed. I don't at all like my picture now . . ." <sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Thomas Woolner, R.A., Sculptor and Poet, His Life in Letters* (London, 1917), p. 52

<sup>8</sup> *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism*, p. 9

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183. Probably the "Saint Catherine"

"Please oblige me in two matters, or you will make me ill again. Take all the pure green out of the flesh in the *Nativity* . . . and try to get it a little less like worsted-work by Wednesday, when I will send for it. I want the Archdeacon of Salop, who is coming for some practical talk over religious art for the multitude, to see it . . . If you would but do the things I *want*, it would be much easier" <sup>14</sup>

It never occurred to Ruskin that Rossetti might resent these strictures, and take no interest at all in the Archdeacon of Salop.

Wilenski says in his book on Ruskin that Rossetti did not care whether Ruskin was ill, or puzzled, or angry, so long as he continued to fulfill his function. "From Rossetti's viewpoint Ruskin was a person who gave him money, and who received in return not only his failures (to which he was welcome) but also some of his good drawings — which neither he nor anyone else deserved . . . at bottom he was obviously an idiot or he would not imagine that a dab of Chinese white or a streak of emerald green, placed where *he* wanted it, would make any difference to the real goodness or badness of a picture" <sup>15</sup>

Ruskin's dictatorial habit was growing on him, and he began to treat Rossetti's drawings as though they were a schoolboy's exercises to be criticized and returned for correction. The tone of these two unpublished letters is in amusing contrast to that of the "respectful" letter of April 1854.

[*June 1855?*]

DEAR ROSSETTI

I hope to be home again on the 20th & to see you soon — but to put your mind so far at rest about the drawing — pray understand that it is not mere *caprice* of mine that you may — or may not, hit, in doing other drawings. If you do right — I shall like it — if wrong — I shall not. This drawing <sup>16</sup> is in many respects

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp 107-108

<sup>15</sup> R. H. Wilenski, *John Ruskin* (London, 1933), p. 272

<sup>16</sup> "The Nativity," a water color (1855) executed in a week for Ruskin. Rossetti "counted it one of his best performances but the critic dissented," and Rossetti offered to exchange it (W. M. Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer*, London, 1889, p. 26)



PEN AND INK DRAWING OF RUSKIN BY ROSSETTI





likeable — but in many more *Wrong* A human arm — on the one hand, is not this — [sketch] as the academicians draw it — but neither is it this, — [sketch] as *you* draw it Flesh is not Buff colour — as Mr Neabert draws it — but neither is it pea-green, as you draw it Half of the angels noses are turned all on one side — the child's mouth is turned round into his right <sup>17</sup> cheek. and the blue of the Virgins dress is ridiculously bright to be in full shadow — The Virgins *eye* is beautiful — the entering angel very fine — some of the other angels well felt and fine in colour — the middle group confused — I can't make out in the least whether the virgin is sitting — kneeling — lying — or standing — or whether St Joseph has got hold of her arm — waist — shoulder — or knee — If there is anything — in an idiosyncratic way — which I *particularly dislike*, it is dirty naked old men with the soles of their feet turned up I have seen much [of] both of them in Italy — and perceived with other senses as well as eyes Now that *Ruth* was all *right* as far as it went — noble and beautiful — If you work *easily*, you will please me — if you labour (without the model), you will not — as I said before. You know I couldn't get your letter till the day after the drawing came by fast train — so I was examining it — of course, by all the candles in the house.

Ever yours affectionately

JR

Of course all this applies only to fast sketching When you work from nature, slowly you can't go wrong, with your eyes and feeling, but when you over-labour a sketch it is all up with it.

[1855<sup>2</sup>]

DEAR ROSSETTI

The drawing is a pleasant surprise, as I had not the slightest doubt of its being at present in this state — [sketch]. I like it

<sup>17</sup> "Left" deleted

pretty well on the whole, having quite given it up when I saw it last But what horses legs<sup>1</sup> are *they* in armour too or only rheumatic?

Dont order the frame till I see you. I don't quite like the one I have. I ought to return your Blake — but cant run to get it just now Most affectionately yours

JR

What a stupid fellow you are not to tell me how Ida <sup>18</sup> is.

On January 18, 1861, in writing to William, Gabriel says: "I asked Ruskin whether he would say a good word for something of Christina's to the *Cornhill*, and he promised to do so if she liked. If so, would she send me by book-post the book containing the Poem about the two Girls and the Goblins?" <sup>19</sup>

Gabriel writes indignantly a little later "It is with very great regret and disgust that I enclose a note from Ruskin about Christina's poems — most senseless, I think. I have told him something of the sort in my answer. He has not yet returned the volume I sent him (with the *Goblins*), but I suppose will soon. I have some idea (with Christina's approval) of sending the *Goblins* to Mrs Gaskell, who is good-natured and appreciative, and might get it into the *Cornhill* or elsewhere Would she like this done? Or perhaps Allingham might help" <sup>20</sup>

The oracle Ruskin had only seen fit to pronounce that no publisher would take the poems "so full are they of quaintnesses and offences Irregular measure . . . is the calamity of modern poetry.

. Your sister should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like . . . But she must have the Form first."<sup>21</sup> His attitude towards Christina is so odd throughout that it seems to require some explanation. The only one that has been suggested is that Ruskin felt it was damag-

<sup>18</sup> Ruskin's name for Rossetti's wife, probably from Tennyson's *Princess*

<sup>19</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 161

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, II, 165

<sup>21</sup> *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism*, pp 258-259

ing to Gabriel to have another Rossetti in the market, and that he preferred to have him stand alone. Gabriel had his own troubles in meeting Ruskin's ideas, and the latter's comments on Rossetti's poems are typical. His profound criticism of "Jenny" in 1859 had been "I have read *Jenny*. He [the speaker of the poem] reasons and feels entirely like a wise and just man — yet is occasionally drunk and brutal . . . His throwing the money into her hair is disorderly — he is altogether a disorderly person."<sup>22</sup> This note runs through his letters, as when he wrote, "It may be as well that you should keep this letter (if you *can* keep anything safe in that disreputable litter of yours)",<sup>23</sup> and again in October 1855, when he wrote to Rossetti, "If you wanted to oblige *me*, you would keep your room in order and go to bed at night. All your fine speeches go for nothing till you do that"<sup>24</sup>

The fact that the friendship between Ruskin and Rossetti came to an end is certainly not surprising, but the fact that it lasted for ten years is extraordinary, considering the temperaments of the two men.

<sup>22</sup> *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism*, p. 234

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110

### III

#### WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT

IT is difficult for readers of the various books dealing with the life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to understand the extraordinary fascination he exerted over everyone who came in contact with him. He was not remarkably prepossessing in appearance, but he had what we call personal magnetism to an amazing degree. Philip Bourke Marston wrote to Oliver Madox Brown "What a supreme man is Rossetti! Why is he not some great exiled king, that we might give our lives in trying to restore him to his kingdom! I wonder shall I ever be able to let him know how I love and honour him!"<sup>1</sup> This was the sort of feeling Rossetti inspired all his life. He was always ready to accept any man at his own value — and then to idealize him. Canon Richard Watson Dixon wrote of him "His advice was always given warmly and freely, and, when he spoke of the works of others, it was always in the most generous spirit of praise. It was, in fact, impossible to have been more free from captiousness, jealousy, envy, or any other form of pettiness, than this truly noble man."<sup>2</sup>


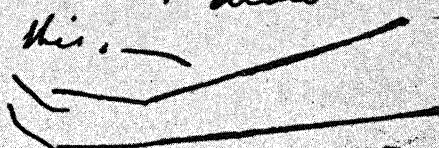
Until the last sad years of his life his humor pervaded all he said and did, and he was careless whether it was taken seriously or not. One day when young "Ned" Jones (the "Burne" was added later) asked him earnestly why he had introduced some inexplicable object into one of his pictures, Rossetti replied in a deep voice, "To puzzle fools, boy, to puzzle fools."<sup>3</sup> Another day, Mary, the maid of the establishment in Red Lion Square, came into the room where he was painting, and Rossetti, who had been chanting over some lines of poetry which had greatly

<sup>1</sup> John H. Ingram, *Oliver Madox Brown* (London, 1883), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 407.

<sup>3</sup> *Time Was: The Reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson* (London, 1931), p. 88.

Dear Rossetti

I hope to be home again  
on the 20<sup>th</sup> to see you soon -  
but to put your mind so far as  
rest about the drawing. I very much understand  
that it is not mere caprice of mine  
that you may - or may not, hit,  
in doing other drawings. If you do  
right - I shall like it. if wrong  
- I shall not. This drawing is  
in many respects likeable - but  
it is many more wrong. A  
human arm - on the one hand, is  
not this -  as the  
academicians draw it - but neither  
is it this. - 

as you draw it



amused him, suddenly addressed them to her in the form of a question:

Mary! — Shall the hide of a fierce lion  
Be stretched on frame of wood  
For a daughter's foot to lie on,  
Stained with her father's blood?

To which Mary replied briskly, "It shall if you like, sir," which so delighted Rossetti that he said to Burne-Jones, "That's a most remarkable girl, Ned. Not one woman in ten would have given an intelligent answer like that to a question." <sup>4</sup>

Holman Hunt, with whom he became associated in 1848, was the very antithesis of Rossetti. He was a slow, conscientious workman, completely lacking in humor, and inclined to be extremely resentful of rivalry. He and Rossetti quarreled in 1857 about a female model. <sup>5</sup> William Rossetti says his brother was at fault in the affair, <sup>6</sup> which is not too difficult to believe.

Hunt relates the story of their first meeting in May 1848, when Rossetti caused him much embarrassment by rushing up to him at the exhibition of Hunt's picture, "The Eve of St. Agnes," and declaring "boisterously" that it was the best picture of the year. <sup>7</sup> In spite of the distastefulness to Hunt of this enthusiasm, it seems to have served as an open sesame to companionship with him and his friend Millais, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood soon took form over a volume of what Ruskin termed "Lasinio's execrable engravings." Hunt at this time was twenty-one, and Millais nineteen. So much has been written about this period that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it here. In later years Hunt considered himself the father and grandfather of Pre-Raphaelitism, as well as the only Pre-Raphaelite who counted. When he called Rossetti a common thief, as Ford Madox Hueffer says he did in 1890, <sup>8</sup> it was merely his attempt to put into words his conviction that Rossetti was a bad man because he was not a religious

<sup>4</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, I, 172. See also Hall Caine, *Recollections of D. G. Rossetti* (1882), p. 16. <sup>5</sup> Annie Miller, I believe.

<sup>6</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 201. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 120.

<sup>8</sup> Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford), *Ancient Lights and Certain New Reflections* (London, 1911), p. 211.



painter who had traveled to Palestine in search of the truth. The only way to salvation was to be a believing Pre-Raphaelite, and there was only one — Holman Hunt. It was certainly irritating under these circumstances to see Rossetti reaping financial benefits and receiving adulation as the great Pre-Raphaelite painter; nevertheless, Hunt's attempt in his autobiography, published after Rossetti's death, to belittle in every way his fame and influence reveals an attitude of mind that would have been inconceivable to Rossetti. Ford Madox Brown, who was by no means a blind worshiper of Rossetti, repeatedly cites instances of his eagerness to advance the interests of his fellow artists, and Dr. Hake in his *Memoirs of Eighty Years*, in speaking of Rossetti, says: "From rivalry and its jealousies he was absolutely free. . . . Above all, he was ready at all times to serve a friend, and to exert his influence to that end" <sup>9</sup>

In his book, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, Holman Hunt prefers to ignore his youthful devotion to Rossetti and to speak of him with such smug superiority that it is a satisfaction to publish three of his early letters to show how different his attitude was at the time from his later representation of it.

*May 29 1850*

DEAR ROSSETTI

Upon calling on Creswick <sup>10</sup> with some designs this morning, and commencing business by reminding him of his commission, he politely told me that he did not remember anything whatever of it, and that he *thought* I must be mistaken as he had a system never to give commissions, he told me he had seen the "Germ" and liked my etching very much, and was surprized I did not employ myself in that way as very much money is made thus he himself clearly enough by his, to pay his rent and taxes. Consider at

<sup>9</sup> Page 221

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Creswick, 1811-1869, landscape painter

once and consult shortly, what we can illustrate. Moxon has the *copyright* of Keats's and is very jealous of the slightest infringement. Creswick thought an original volume would take, but now that the "Germ" has exhausted the old matter of the P R B, the time required in procuring material for illustrating would be a great objection. We ought to have the volume ready next Christmas I think? How shall we do for landscape? as in catering for tin we must cater to the taste for variety of purchasers? Perhaps as you have shewn a decided talent in that walk, you will come down from your stilts, and come up to the scratch, considering, it will enable you to do so at quarter day. Imagine a greedy landlord choking himself with the above<sup>22</sup> after handing over a receipt.

Hunt is about designing a subject from the "Vicar of Wakefield" for next year and has vowed that in future he will never do anything [*sic*] above the comprehensive powers of a x.x — The Royal Academicians were two days making out his subject 1850 he has also just commenced a Gleaner but is afraid the subject is obscure, but is in hopes by keeping the figures in the background down to tell the main intention of a pretty girl dressed in ready made costume, perhaps your opinion will strengthen his fears, in which case he will give it up.

I think, Rossetti I wish I had not been an artist, seeing, that artists only sham theirs is not a business

Your sincere PRB

W. HOLMAN HUNT

This mild and clumsy irony does not prepare one for the vindictive tone of Hunt's autobiography, any more than the following letter would lead one to expect Hunt's belittling of Rossetti, or his attempts to assume Rossetti's scepter. In 1852 Hunt, in company with Edward Lear, who had ambitions to become a Pre-

<sup>22</sup> Sketches in text

Raphaelite painter, was at Fairlight, near Hastings. While Hunt was painting his sheep picture, "The Strayed Sheep," Lear was engaged on an oil painting, "The Quarries of Syracuse." Hunt recalls that they worked amid equinoctial gales and their suite of rains.<sup>12</sup>

*Tuesday night Novr. 22/52*

MY DEAR GABRIEL

It was a great delight to me, the receiving of your affectionate note. Albeit I always regard our friendship as of a less precarious nature, than those which require continual assurances from one to the other of the holders, and that I often refrain from sending you accounts of my little ways of life, because to do so would seem like playing the tattoo on a kettle drum, and because it is an unspeakable comfort to feel that there lies in reserve the most cared for love, as the most trustworthy band in a great battle, yet sometimes, when troubled or impatient, I am glad to call out to you, and to feel that comfort in your answer, which a child feels in the fearful dark, at knowing that he is not alone.

I am very much concerned at the account of your pains. I hope that your heel is cured by this time, and that you have not had a recurrence [*sic*] of the odious toothache. I myself have suffered by this last to some extent lately, altho not so greatly as I might have expected from having been so much exposed to the wet and cold, nevertheless enough to teach me that it will be necessary to undergo another martyrdom in the dentist's hands, immediately on my return to town. I hope to return on Thursday morning, there is only one more morning's work to be done to the sheep picture. The other I must spend on a small sketch I began some time ago for the torturer above mentioned. If the weather does not permit this I shall return at once — tomorrow perhaps, and

<sup>12</sup> W. Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (London, 1905-06), I, 336.

now that the firm has exhausted the old matter of the P.B. the time required in procuring material for illustrating would be a great objection. We ought to have the volume ready by next Christmas I think.

How shall we do for Landscapes? as in catering for him we must cater to the taste of the purchasers? perhaps as you have shown a decided inclination that with you will come down from you still, and come up to the market, consider it with me, you will see it as at such day.

I give a property Landlord claim, him self with the above after landing over a receipt.

Think of what designing a subject from the view of the landscape for next year and has more

that future he will never do any thing about the comprehensive power of a x. x. — The Royal Commissioners were two days making out his subject 1850. he has also just commenced a Glance, but is afraid the subject is obscure, but is in hopes by keeping the figures in the background down to tell the main intention of a pretty good shaped in many ways. I think, perhaps you open on with strength the fear, in which case he will you I expect.

I think, perhaps I wish I had not been an artist, seeing that artists only claim their is not a business. Yours sincerely P.B.

William Hunt





then I shall see you, and your new studio, which must be a delightful place

I am full of misgivings about my picture. I never expected it to give much satisfaction to myself, but nevertheless cannot but feel disappointed at its effect now that it is all filled in — I am half doubtful of showing it, even to the owner, I deserved more success, my perseverance in doing it, I regard as the one act of duty of my whole life.

At this moment the noise of the wind and the rain is so confusing that I find the same difficulty in writing what I intend, which there would be, were I, under the same circumstances, writing from the half heard dictation of another person. And it is somewhat aggravated by have [*sic*] little ink and no pen, but this, which provokingly runs through the paper at every curve — therefore I am tempted to conclude, not however without reminding you of *my meeting*, from fear that I should be hindered from seeing you before it takes place —

Your brother

HOLMAN

*Gabriel Dante* [*sic*] *Rossetti* PRB

In the next letter Hunt speaks of the designs for the Moxon edition of Tennyson and says that he is not able to get on with them for want of models, and therefore “it is nothing to make the alteration and I hope you will take the subject you speak of from *The Lady of Shalott*” It is curious in the light of this to read in his book that in 1856 Moxon called on him with many repinings that Tennyson’s *Poems* was so long delayed. “I was steadily fulfilling my undertaking to do six illustrations and no other work, till they were completed. He revealed that his heart was sore about Rossetti, who having promised, had not sent any drawing, and now, when Moxon called, was ‘not at home,’ and would not reply to letters.

"As the price to be paid for each drawing was £25, and Rossetti was in pecuniary straits notwithstanding continual aid from his brother, his aunts, and Ruskin, it was difficult to account for this apparently determined neglect, so I took the first opportunity to see him. He avowed at once that he did not care to do any because all the best subjects had been taken by others. 'You, for instance, have appropriated *The Lady of Shalott*, which was the one I cared for most of all,' he pleaded.

"'You should have chosen at the beginning, I only had a list sent me of unengaged subjects,' I said, '. . . I was glad in reading the list of poems chosen for the Tennyson book to find this one at my disposal. My new drawing is now far advanced. I had determined also to illustrate the later incident in the poem, but that I will give up to you.'"<sup>13</sup>

From the following letter it is evident that in 1855 Hunt had not only been willing to have Rossetti do "*The Lady of Shalott*" but had definitely renounced his claim in Rossetti's favor at that time.

*Jerusalem March 21st*  
*1855*

DEAR ROSSETTI:

What with the unceasing engagements of my friend in London, and the postoffice failures which prevented my receiving a larger average than about one letter to seven sent away, I had just determined to try the abilities of my capricious pen and tender writing-paper no more, excepting in positive business matters, and was congratulating myself upon having outgrown a weakness for idle correspondence, a vice evidently held in great horror by most of my friends, when to my extreme confusion the post-office clerk sent me your epistle of January 30th, and showed me that my proposed reformation could not be founded on such completely universal a precedent as I had concluded, and therefore seeing that I had never wished to be a leader, but only a follower of my

<sup>13</sup> Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, II, 99-102

friends, in the adoption of the superhuman virtue of mysterious silence. You have given me the opportunity of gratifying my natural weakness once more which I must confess I have great pleasure in embracing. Alas! Your sister's commission has come to the wrong place.<sup>14</sup> Very willingly would I sidle up to a basking alligator with "pretty! pretty did he then" and so on and so on, until by gentle patronage I had obtained a good hold of the scuff [*sic*] of his neck, and could thus capture the unwary animal for the grand object in idea but he is not here, not nearer than Higher Egypt in fact which is much farther south than I have any intention of going this journey. So I am afraid the scheme must be regarded at present only as an intention. Of course, a profoundly secret one, too, until my next journey gives me an opportunity of securing the honour of the scheme to the lady who invented it. You have truly had to suffer a loss<sup>15</sup> which should excuse weightier accusations than any that I have against you, in fact I have none. I growl to myself at times when the weeks go by without a word from home friends, but the fit goes by and leaves me none the worse, unless an additional grain of hardness is an evil. You tell me of a beautiful subject upon which you are engaged, "Found" which I shall be most glad to hear of your proceeding with until the end. I could wish we were all employed about such subjects if there be any power in a simple representation by Art of such terrible incidents wherein the guilty see the angels sorrowing for them to lead the unstained to guard their innocence. I can't tell why you think people can suppose it to follow in the wake of my last year's picture.<sup>16</sup> If so, I should never be able to paint another picture for I believe you have designed subjects bearing on every art, science, feeling, and virtue that exist in our world. Surely it

<sup>14</sup> Christina had a great fancy for crocodiles and alligators (*Rossetti Papers*, pp. 67-68). Also, see her poem, "My Dream." Hunt has made a large sketch of an alligator on the first page of this letter.

<sup>15</sup> Death of his father

<sup>16</sup> "The Awakened Conscience"



is enough to illustrate a moral with a different incident from that of another's. I believe that good can not be done by a single exposure of the vice particularly in this vice as men would see nothing but a pretty sentimental vanity in one illustration of the evil, when I believe many would hesitate in a mad career if they were led to consider the sin denounced by a class of men who till this time have been thought excused for some licentiousness. You have a wonderfully beautiful motto for the subject,<sup>17</sup> one that I have often been moved at in reading. I can not indeed think of anything by which your designs as described could be improved. I am certain it will be a most beautiful and valuable picture. For my own part, there is but little to describe. I tried hard to finish a picture<sup>18</sup> which I began three months ago at the Dead Sea, but a series of extraordinary obstacles retarded me, and last Saturday came the last day on which it could have been sent with that eternal fortnight's work which hangs on at last still to do, so it is here now, and I am working on it every day. I did not tell the subject but to one or two lest it be thought available by some dashing animal painter, and be exhibited before mine were ready, yet you may have heard of it from Collins.<sup>19</sup> There is scarcely anything to describe. The poor "Scape-goat" was dressed some [*sic*] scarlet wool on his head, and was then conducted out to the edge of the wilderness. At one time before the death of Simon the Just, the beast invariably jumped over the precipice, and was killed, but after this time, he escaped, hooted and pelted into the wilderness as the Talmud says. Now this wilderness leads to the Dead Sea where Sodom was, and the goat must have been driven to this very place as the only spot free from his tormentors. I don't know I should have thought the subject demanding im-

<sup>17</sup> "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal" Jer 2 2

<sup>18</sup> "The Scapegoat"

<sup>19</sup> Charles Allston Collins, 1828-1873. One of the original PRB, son of William and brother of Wilkie Collins

mediate illustration had I not had the opportunity of painting this extraordinary spot as background from Nature, and had not the Jewish conceptions of the Messiah which they have formed without attention to types and prophecies, such as this, been brought so often before my eyes I should like to show it to you yet I have that horrible feeling of dissatisfaction with [*sic*] urges me to put it by, and trust to my next work as my hope of using my little strength to some purpose. My other picture I paint at as Russians are kept at the guns with bayonets. I compel myself to labour despite frightful suspicions of its never coming to anything. I could never tell you what a full equivalent the beauty of this country is to any bothers I suffer from, now more than ever. "For lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Even with all hideous domes and minarets the city is the most purely poetic sight on earth, I am convinced. Every hill about here is covered with a delicate green which makes the country heavenly beyond all hopes description. I should be dreadfully sad in leaving the place with so very little of its countless beauties on canvass or in any way portrayed, for in fact, I can promise literally nothing. The figure picture I am doing has no landscape, and the other is of a distant place. One can do nothing in so short a time as a twelve-month.

I am not able to get on with Tennyson's designs for want of models — I leave them for the most part to do in Europe. Seeing this it is nothing to make the alteration, and I hope you will take the subject you speak of from the Lady of Shalott. When I return, I shall be glad to help in the College for working men <sup>20</sup> if

<sup>20</sup> Founded in 1854 by Frederick Denison Maurice, who was also its first principal, to provide evening classes in literature, history, economics, and art. The lecturers gave their services free. The college was situated in Red Lion Square.

I can make myself of any use· if not, I must look for some other means for assisting in such work. I am disturbed to hear such unsatisfactory accounts of poor Brown's<sup>21</sup> fortune· one thing, however, the birth of a son I can heartily congratulate him upon I believe under any circumstances a man must and should rejoice at such an event I have high hopes for the things that the children of this generation shall live to see

What dreadful ends for North<sup>22</sup> and Cottingham!<sup>23</sup> Coming both together they seem like the end of a play. The first was, I believe, quite mad, and not a safe citizen of the world, in fact, I feared that one day he might do some extraordinary mischief. I could have wished that the other had lived long enough to repair some of the evils he must have occasioned in thirty years' unscrupulous selfishness and cunning, but there is some more perfect means of mercy for both than any we see, I believe I am very thankful for your sonnet — it reminds me of the old days of less interrupted communion, and moreover in a more direct manner gives me great pleasure I intend to stay a little over the time I had fixed as that of my departure, until May is old. tell William I continually delay writing to him, hoping to get some spare hours to look over an Italian grammar that I may have fewer faults in my next. Bid him not to wait for mine, but to let me know as soon as possible at what spot in my journey homeward he will be able to meet me, then I can fix time. I calculate for some short time between my arrival at and my going away from Constantinople — after then, I shall be pretty much at his bidding It is about three weeks' journey from here to Beyrout then a week to Constantinople. This may help him to calculate

<sup>21</sup> Ford Madox Brown — birth of Oliver Madox Brown

<sup>22</sup> William North, eccentric literary man, emigrated to the United States of America and committed suicide, 1854 (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 48-49, also *Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti*, London, 1906, I, 164-167)

<sup>23</sup> Nockall Johnson Cottingham, architect, drowned at sea, 1854

roughly in laying out his journey, but I will write with precision soon I suppose I can not be in England before the end of August I wonder whether I shall be able to get any house-painting work to recruit my exhausted purse of course, Art is quickly coming to her end, yet men take large studios I shall bring home a tent and petition for the right of pitching it in Newman Street, or some other artistic neighborhood Give my best remembrances to your Mother, and sisters Greet William lovingly, and all our friends

Yours, W HOLMAN HUNT

## IV

### WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

ANOTHER friend who treated Rossetti very shabbily in his memoirs was William Bell Scott. The two had known each other since 1847, when Rossetti had written Scott an enthusiastic letter about his poems. Upon receiving a reply, Rossetti had immediately forwarded to him a number of his own verses. Not long after this Scott called at 50 Charlotte Street and met the whole Rossetti family, who became very fond of him. So far as any one knew, the feeling was reciprocated, and it was not until Scott's *Autobiographical Notes* was published in 1892 after his death that the change which had come over his sentiments was fully revealed. The Rossettis and their friends were dismayed by the resentful tone of the book. Christina declined to read it after hearing from William that its representation was unfair to Gabriel.<sup>1</sup> From the time of the latter's death, in fact, Scott's letters are full of slighting references to his former friend.

He was, on the whole, a strange character. His marked moral rigidity gave way at times, as may be discovered from putting two and two together in the following instance. William Rossetti, with his usual discretion, relates in *Some Reminiscences* the story of a collector, "Y. Z., who has no relation to my Brother or anyone else whom I have named as addicted to collecting." This gentleman was a collector of prints and had got together a dozen or so which formed a series lacking but one. "One day he entered an auction-room prior to a sale, and inspected a portfolio. Here he found the entire series of those same prints, including the missing specimen. The insatiable greed of the collector raged or raved in him at the sight. He actually stole that missing print, and walked off with it. Y. Z. was a mature, a moral, a reflective, and a cautious man, and yet he committed this serious offence, a veritable act of lunacy. He might have been detected, and then

<sup>1</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti* (London, 1908), p. 190.

his whole life was wrecked, and his whole collection of engravings a withered leaf in the whirlwind. His means were amply sufficient for bidding for the lot, and so securing, at an outlay not worth debate, the particular print which he wanted, along with others as duplicates ”<sup>2</sup>

In a series of unpublished letters to Miss Losh, given in another chapter of this book, Dante Gabriel Rossetti makes some remarks which, in spite of William's caution, we can connect with this story. On November 9, 1868, he writes.

“Calling on Scotus<sup>3</sup> the other day, I insisted on seeing that Forbidden Fruit, which he snatched in the Eden of Leicester Square. He professed not to know which it was of a set he had, but I recognized it by an extra amount of affectionate rubbing and mending which it had evidently undergone.

“When the large sketch book arrives, I wish Miss Boyd and you to study Scotus in various favorite characters as performed by him in early life. Unfortunately we have no pictorial record of him in a later rapid act at Puttick and Simpson's, but that has doubtless been photographed by the Recording Angel and retained in an important collection which will one day be knocked down (together it is to be feared with the originals) at very doubtful rates indeed.”

This was still a stock joke in August 1869, when Rossetti was visiting with the Scotts at Penkill Castle. “Two policemen were seen wandering in this neighborhood lately — owing to Scotus' want of hair, it could not betray him by standing on end so the bobbies overlooked what was doubtless the object of their visit.”

And as late as October 1871, again writing to Miss Losh, Rossetti includes a mention of Scott's fall from grace.

“Scotus pursues, as you probably know, his path as of old, divided between painting, writing, and the multifarious occupations of the collector, which no doubt still occasionally lead him in the direction of Puttick and Simpson's, though not I trust into the broad path which leadeth to destruction ”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I, 283-284

<sup>3</sup> W B Scott.

<sup>4</sup> The *Fortnightly Review*, May 1928, published a series of letters from Rossetti to Miss Boyd, edited by John Purves. In one of these (November 3, 1870) Rossetti

There must have been something endearing in the man's personality, or the contemporary references to him would not be so affectionate, Ford Madox Brown says in his diary, "Emma<sup>5</sup> enchanted with Scott as all women are, a truly nice fellow and an honour to know",<sup>6</sup> but whatever the quality was, it is utterly lacking when one meets him only through his autobiography or his letters

The following letter was written in 1871, when Rossetti was living at Kelmscott Manor, the house he shared for some years with William Morris<sup>7</sup>

*Penkill Tuesday Evg*

DEAREST GABRIEL,

I would very decidedly advise you against your new conclusion to "Cloud Confines." These lines, "Oh never from *thee* to sever," etc. introduce quite a new, and I think conflicting reference. You would have to adopt the Capital T. in "thee," and unset the balance and meaning of the whole. Even the former concluding verse does this to some extent, that is to say, they intimate a destiny and affirm a condition of the soul for ever, — is not this contradicting the tenor of the poem? Would it not be better simply to close with the refrain already employed

Still we say as we go, etc

Many thanks for your suggestions which improve my sonnets immensely, or rather will improve them when I can work in the suggestions properly. We can scarcely say (Sonnet 2)

This man *alone*

Of all that generation is the *one*,

---

writes "At least I do not see why he should not have told you so mild a fact after the never-to-be-forgotten revelations made to us one dinner-time at Penkill"

<sup>5</sup> His wife

<sup>6</sup> *Ruskin Rossetti Preraphaelitism*, p. 39

<sup>7</sup> Rossetti's letters to Scott, including the one to which this forms the reply, were published in *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott*, but Scott says he kept no copies of his own letters (II, pp. 129-130)

that would be saying too much. Will this meet the difficulty? I alter some other points as you will observe  
(Last Division Sonnet 2)

The corn and poppies of those populous years  
Have fallen alike, the chaff clouds cease to whirr  
About the thrashers eyes, about his ears  
The din of Autumn dies, and lo this one  
Of all that age is the elected son!  
So wonderful is Time the harvester

I have made a thorough change <sup>8</sup> the other (Sonnet 1) but on reading it over again I will not send it you as I intended, the change does not seem quite easy and right.

Have you heard anything of Howell <sup>9</sup> lately? Has William <sup>10</sup> returned home?

Ever yours

W B. S.

Your tidings of Christina are discouraging Letitia <sup>11</sup> in writing the other day gave a similar report. I have written to Howell — making enquiries about the two little landscapes If he has not found a buyer for “The Rainy Day” I mean to make a marriage present of it to Laura Epps Tadema.

The following letter to John Ingram <sup>12</sup> and the two written to Moncure Conway <sup>13</sup> show the way Scott wrote and spoke about Rossetti after 1883 His name had only to be mentioned for Scott to make some derogatory remark. The “false feeling” alluded to in the letter to Conway, March 24, 1884, refers to the admiration expressed for Rossetti’s work on all sides after his

<sup>8</sup> Word torn out

<sup>9</sup> Charles Augustus Howell

<sup>10</sup> William Rossetti

<sup>11</sup> Scott’s wife

<sup>12</sup> Editor of Eminent Women Series, and biographer of Poe, Marlowe, etc See p 165 of this book

<sup>13</sup> An American preacher and author, from 1864 to 1884 pastor of South Place Church, Finsbury, London



death, which seems to have aroused Scott's ire whenever he heard it.

*92 Cheyne Walk. Chelsea  
17 February 1883*

DEAR SIR

I hope you won't think me very hard-hearted if I say that I can't very well accede to your suggestion. I never could do anything poetically worthy either of myself or of the subject I took in hand except when the verse came to me spontaneously. In the present case too I knew Nolly Brown<sup>24</sup> and his aspirations too closely and completely to write in a merely elocutionary way about him. I know of two sonnets also in his praise, one of which some friends of mine look upon as the greatest joke in verse, that is Mr. Caine's the other, Rossetti's, is nearly as much so, except to spiritualistic table-turners.

I am sorry to respond unsympathetically to any proposition made by the author and editor of the *Memoir and Works of Poe*, and would like much to have the pleasure of meeting him. I am, however, a home keeping elderly person, and can only insinuate that the honour of a visit from you would be a pleasure to

Yours very truly

WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

*John H. Ingram Esq*

*Thursday. 11 May*

MY DEAR CONWAY

I had no misgiving about your kind reception of my new little book of poetry. Indeed I repeatedly thought of Carlyle and your articles about him when I arranged for printing it, and am much pleased by your mentioning the little verse called *Hero-Worship*

<sup>24</sup> Oliver Madox Brown, son of Ford Madox Brown, died at the age of nineteen, 1874.

— I hope you read and liked also the other one accompanying that, called Silence In all Carlyle's eulogies on that negative virtue I desiderated the application of his own Theory, and was inclined to cry "Old boy, then shut up!"

Emerson was to my experience a quite different moral nature. He came twice to see me last time he was in this country In both cases he had been to see Carlyle, wh brought him into the locality But the only thing I specifically remember of his talk, as he liked better to learn about one's conditions of life and to indicate some particulars of his own experiences than to dogmatise on abstract criticism or announce his opinions as maxims, was in reply to my asking him why the Rossettis received *comparatively* little attention in America His answer I have never forgotten and never will, though at the time it hit my love and admiration of D. G. R's poetry rather hard, yet the more I thought over it, the truer it appeared His answer was this "We like our own period and what is vital in these days about us, especially in poetry, but the Rossetti work is not touching us — it is exotic."

I am writing with various things going on about me, so am not very precise but that was his phrase I think —

Yours very truly

WILLIAM B. SCOTT

In 1853 Rossetti paid a visit to Scott at Newcastle, and they discussed Scott's poem, "Mary Anne," which had been published in Hunt's *Repository* under the title of "Rosabell." Rossetti persuaded Scott to alter the title, but his suggestion that Scott paint a scene illustrating the meeting of the former lovers as set forth in the poem was rejected According to Scott's story, Rossetti then said that *he* would paint it. In his *Autobiographical Notes* <sup>15</sup> Scott says that this was idle talk on Rossetti's part, as "the truth

<sup>15</sup> I, 289

was he had already begun such a picture " This was the oil painting, "Found," about which Scott was always unreasonably bitter he considered that Rossetti had robbed him in some way not altogether clear to the reader of his *Notes* William Rossetti<sup>16</sup> says that his brother had begun the design for the painting as early as 1852, although the actual oil was not started until the end of 1853

Scott also writes in his account of the visit of 1853 that Rossetti promised to do an etching for the poem when it appeared in Scott's *Poems*, which he was then preparing for the press This was never accomplished, but in 1864 Rossetti painted a water color called "The Gate of Memory" as an illustration for "Mary Anne", he did nothing further with it, and in the following letter it is evident that Scott was debating etching the plate himself

*Penkill Castle Girvon*  
*Ayrshire*  
*24 March 1884*

MY DEAR CONWAY

Is it possible you have been round the world since we had the satisfaction of seeing you at the garden party! We, "home keeping youths have ever homely wits," and can scarcely believe it. I have often been intending writing you since I heard you were home again, having done nothing in the matter of etching *The Gate of Memory*, and so owing you an explanation, but delayed from day to day, till a few days ago having left London and the Daily News following me, I read with much delight your entire long lecture on London, one of the results of which was to make me carry out my intention and congratulate you on returning to the old city with undiminished pleasure in it and I might almost say increased powers. But although I have not crossed the sea I have not been idle, but on the contrary have been very fully occupied, though in a way that does not show, and latterly I have

<sup>16</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 164-165

added another string to my bow, or rather I should say to my psaltry [*sic*] as a bow needs but one, — having been architect to a large addition to this old house, in the shape of a hall, and am here at this moment seeing to the hanging of pictures, etc

About the etching, I am now uncertain as to the propriety of reprinting the poem it was to illustrate, and the truth has been, the amount of false feeling and writing about my friend D. G. R. has made me shy of doing anything involving his memory in any way. However I have not settled the question yet to my own satisfaction, and may still ask to be allowed to fulfill the intention of etching.

Will you kindly remember me to Mrs Conway and your young people, and believe me ever

Very truly yours

WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

I suppose you have read, perhaps heard, Matthew Arnold's lecture on Emerson.

I have sold my prints at home in London. They were offered for by Messrs. Ellis and White, as a business speculation, and I accepted the offer.

In spite of these two examples, Holman Hunt and Scott, Rossetti had friends who remained faithful to him throughout his life and to his memory later. One of these was Edward Burne-Jones, and it is pleasant to realize that in 1877 he cared enough to write to Rossetti as follows

"Folks shewed me your letter in the Times<sup>17</sup> the other day. I was made so happy by your words about me — if there's anything in me for you or others to like, it's your making — ask every-

<sup>17</sup> About the Grosvenor Gallery. "Your scheme must succeed were it but for one name associated with it, that of Burne-Jones — a name representing the loveliest art we have"

where if I ever change in saying it, or ever forget it — I don't think you doubt it though. No one in this world has owed so much to another as I do to you, and pleasant as praise is to an artist I know I shall never in my life take it for myself, I know I needn't tell you this, but the renewal of vows between friends is good" <sup>18</sup>

And in 1892, in writing of their early friendship, he says

"It is nice to be remembering it all, and is good for me now, only the most of it is so indescribable. His talk and his look and his kindness, what words can say them? But bit by bit little forgotten touches will come back I daresay, and some sort of image of him be made out — and if it is a perfect image and all overlaid with gold, it will be truer really than one that should make him halt or begrimed or sully him in the least." <sup>19</sup>

*here is me.*



*do you like it?*

*here is me & mami going a walk*



*do you like it?*

SKETCHES BY EDWARD BURNE-JONES

<sup>18</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, II, 72

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, II, 117

## V

### LATER LETTERS

ONE of the contradictions in Rossetti's many-sided character was his exceptional avidity in making money, and his complete indifference as to what became of it once he had acquired it. Even when his income ran as high as three or four thousand pounds a year, he haggled with his buyers over every guinea — only to keep the money thus obtained loose in a drawer in his studio, from which he disbursed it to anyone who wanted it. Mackail says of him that "inconsiderate and even unscrupulous as Rossetti was himself in some of the larger affairs of life, this particular instinct of generosity was one which never failed him. For the individual in distress — were it a friend in difficulties, or some unknown poor woman on the street, he was always ready to empty his own pockets, and plunge deeply into those of his friends" <sup>1</sup>.

In the meantime his patrons, who had given commissions and paid in advance for these works, often requested some information as to his progress. Rossetti felt this to be very unreasonable, but if not pressed too far, he generally replied with the tact shown in the following letter to Mr. John Mitchell of Bradford. Mr. Mitchell had commissioned an oil painting for £315, the subject to be chosen by Rossetti. He decided on "Venus Verticordia." The letter is dated 1865, but the picture was not finished until 1868.

*16 Cheyne Walk Chelsea  
14 Sept 1865.*

MY DEAR SIR

I much regret the continued delay with your picture of Venus which I had expected to send you before this when I saw you last.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of William Morris*, II, 94

I still trust it will not now be very long in reaching you and am at least confident that it will be greatly the gainer by having awaited a moment of more undivided attention for its completion than I could have given it hitherto. Your having several times expressed yourself solicitous rather for its reaching you satisfactorily than speedily, has induced me to hope that it may please you sufficiently when seen at last to compensate for any delay by which it will have benefited. Meantime I am anxious that you should not think your picture has in any degree escaped my memory, and so write you this word.

With kind remembrances to Mrs Mitchell and your family, I am,

My dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

D. G. ROSSETTI

*John Mitchell Esq.*

The next year Rossetti wrote his mother, "This panic year, strange to say, promises to be much my best as yet,"<sup>2</sup> and in his list of commissions he speaks of one for Mr William Cowper for three hundred guineas. This was "Beata Beatrix," and he says that he could have got more for it from some other quarter but that the Cowpers, though not rich, are very appreciative people, and the picture would be seen by "cultivated folks." The Right Honorable William Cowper Temple, Lord Palmerston's stepson, and his wife were among the kindest of Rossetti's friends throughout his life. In 1865 he addresses him as "Mr. Cowper," so the acquaintance must then have been of recent date.

*4th Sept 1865  
16 Cheyne Walk  
Chelsea*

DEAR MR COWPER

Thanks for your kind letter of the other day. It is my conviction that, in spite of the lower price of the Munich glass and

<sup>2</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 188

the competent execution of Kaulbach's design, the whole would bear no comparison, in beauty of the right kind for the purpose, and consequently in real return for outlay, with such a window as Morris would furnish. Kaulbach's would be a work of general merit, Morris's of special genius for this class of Art

Mr Webb <sup>3</sup> will be very glad to hear from you about the drinking fountain when the time comes. Any work, large or small, he would do nobly

It is very gratifying to me that you and Mrs. Cowper should wish to possess some piece of my handiwork. When I have anything begun which is not too large and which I feel to be of my best, I will give you the refusal of it. One sells so many things in the market nowadays to dealers and to people who only buy for fashion, that it is an exceptional pleasure to be asked for work by those who like it for its own sake —

Many thanks for the sunflowers, which unluckily I was prevented from painting in time — But your suggestion will not be lost, as I shall get some from the College Gardens here, where I see they abound.

Will you give my kindest remembrances to Mrs. Cowper, and believe me

Very truly yours

D. G. ROSSETTI

Rossetti's earliest patron was the Marchioness of Bath, in whose household Charlotte Polidori, Mrs. Rossetti's sister, had a position as governess. She induced Lady Bath in 1849 to buy Rossetti's first painting, "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin," for eighty pounds, and she continued to call her employer's attention

<sup>3</sup> Philip Webb, of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Company, the architect of Morris's house at Upton, he had also marked ability in designing for stained glass (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 217)



to Rossetti's career whenever it was possible. I cannot trace the particular purchase referred to in this letter

56 Euston Square  
Oct. 9 — 1869

MY DEAR GABRIEL,

The following is what Lady Bath says in a letter received this morning "I like your account of the pictures very much — so pray purchase them "that is the *two*" and have the frames regilt if the doing thereof will not greatly exceed one pound each — Will you thank Mr. Rossetti very much for his kindness about the pictures."

Will you therefore my dear Gabriel let the guilders you think well of have the pictures, to repair and regild the two frames and request him when finished to forward them by rail to the Marchioness of Bath, Muntham Court Worthing, whither his bill and the dealer's also had better be sent — With many thanks to you for your invariable willingness to oblige me I am,

Yours very affectionately

CHARLOTTE S. POLIDORI

Among Rossetti's earliest artist friends was Frederick A. Sandys, whom he met about 1857, when Sandys published a caricature of Millais' picture, "Sir Isumbras at the Ford."<sup>4</sup> Rossetti invited him in 1866 to become an inmate of the Cheyne Walk house, an arrangement which lasted about a year and a quarter.<sup>5</sup> Their intimacy continued until 1869, when Rossetti wrote him a friendly letter deprecating Sandys's habit of adopting for his pictures subjects which Rossetti had already planned for his own.<sup>6</sup> Sandys replied with two indignant letters.<sup>7</sup> William

<sup>4</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family Letters*, I, 210

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, I, 256

<sup>6</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, pp 394 ff

<sup>7</sup> Rossetti's temperate answers are given in *Rossetti Papers*, pp 442-444

Rossetti says that in 1880, or earlier, Sandys evinced a wish to re-knit his old intimacy with Rossetti, but that they did not actually meet. The following letter from Rossetti to Sandys shows that as early as 1873 they were both eager to forget their differences:

*Kelmscott*  
*Lechlade*

*20 July*  
*1873*

MY DEAR SANDYS

This is a sad hearing indeed about poor Mary's<sup>8</sup> relapse, after I had really hoped the worst was quite over. I do think you are at all times the unluckiest fellow in the world, and any sign of hopeful prospects only seems to provoke Fortune to bitterer blows. Of course your work must, in such anxiety, be quite at a standstill, and that at a moment when the best results, both as to work and destination of work, are within your reach.

I have been meaning daily to say how thorough and loving I felt your letter to be, and should have done so ere now but for unusual and unavoidable calls on my time and pen. It would give me very sincere pleasure if it were possible ere fine weather is quite gone, to get you down here, as the place is a perfect haven of rest. As yet the fine weather has hardly come, though since St Swithin's rainy day it has somehow persisted in getting finer and finer. I am embedded in work such as it is, and find it more difficult daily to get *to* London just as I used to find it impossible to get *out of* it. From no source could encouraging words be more welcome than from you, and I can but too often echo in my own person your own despondent view of the work you get done, — so am not without need of encouragement. Just lately, since I painted that large picture, I feel for the first time in my life something like a sense of *style* in my work, a quality quite deficient

<sup>8</sup> The lady known as Mrs Sandys.

before with me, while with you it always seemed the first of natural instincts. The fact is, to paint even one big picture is one's best chance of improvement, — but then the picture itself must hang on a staircase at best, to say nothing of the loss it is to one to paint it.

I am very glad that at least you have Howell with you to cheer you in this trouble, and I know how invaluable our dear affectionate Kitty<sup>9</sup> must be in every way. Fortunately her own ill health seems to have quite worn itself out for some time past. I trust her patient may fare likewise —

With love to all, I am ever your affectionate

D. G. ROSSETTI

Turn over

PS Howell said some time back that he would try and send me some photos of some of your late drawings, or pictures. Is this feasible? Nothing would give me greater pleasure, and I have a photograph cabinet here which at last keeps my possessions of that kind in safety.

The two following notes are also concerned with Rossetti's paintings. As they both refer to Miss Corder's<sup>10</sup> receipt, they were probably written about the same time, and the second one may be dated 1876 or 1877 by the allusion to the important picture for Mr. Clarence Fry (of the firm of photographers), which was doubtless "Venus Astarte"<sup>11</sup>. The notes are addressed to Theodore Watts, whom Rossetti met in 1872 through his friend, Dr. T. Gordon Hake,<sup>12</sup> when he was in difficulties about a check

<sup>9</sup> Howell's wife

<sup>10</sup> Rosa Corder, Whistler's model, and Howell's friend and assistant copyist

<sup>11</sup> See p. 125, Chapter VII

<sup>12</sup> It has been stated that Dr. Hake acted as Rossetti's physician. This is a misconception, since Hake retired from practice ten years before he met Rossetti (Thomas Hake and Arthur Compton-Rickett, *The Life and Letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton*, London, 1916, I, 69).

which some woman had forged in his name. Watts, a lawyer, extricated him from this affair so satisfactorily that Rossetti began to call on him to solve all his problems — and their name was legion!

*Sunday [1876 or 1877].*<sup>13</sup>

MY DEAR WATTS

I have constantly been meaning (and always forgetting) to ask you what is necessary to be done as to Brass<sup>14</sup> and the stables.<sup>15</sup> Of course he *can* only have possession during my term of lease, but is it necessary to give him any notice to quit? — and if so, what length of notice? I need not trouble you to answer this, but only write because I am always forgetting it. When I see you again we can speak of it.

Ever yours

DGR

Another thing is to write officially to Miss Corder to deliver her picture. but for this purpose it is necessary to get the receipt dated by G G H.<sup>16</sup>

*Wednesday [1876 or 1877]*<sup>17</sup>

MY DEAR WATTS

I enclose 2 documents which you ought to see.

I propose to answer Fry's note to the effect that the frame will reach me only tomorrow (Thursday) and that the picture will then need my best final consideration — thus causing some days'

<sup>13</sup> Written on black-edged paper. Maria Rossetti had died in November 1876.

<sup>14</sup> Brass was a builder who in 1872 made some alteration in Rossetti's studio (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 253).

<sup>15</sup> In August 1869 Rossetti wrote Ford Madox Brown, "On Monday I actually got possession of the stables, & broke down the door separating them from the garden. On soberly considering them, I think them most promising" (*Rossetti Papers*, p. 453).

<sup>16</sup> George Hake, son of Dr. T. Gordon Hake, had been acting as secretary to Rossetti. They parted company in 1877.

<sup>17</sup> Written on black-edged paper.

delay before I should be content to show it him, feeling naturally nervous after so long question of it

The other letter is puzzling as regards the Corder picture Dunn<sup>18</sup> saw it at Pinti's<sup>19</sup> some months before Graham<sup>20</sup> saw it there also, — so what becomes of the story of "a few hours"?

I should be very glad to see you if you could manage to look in. You see the frame will really be here tomorrow.

Ever yours

DGR

It seems absolutely necessary to get Miss C's receipt for the price of the picture from George with my other receipts and papers if possible

The following postscript is on a separate sheet, and I do not know what letter it followed originally It is on a single sheet of plain note paper.

P S I now learn from Dunn that Ellis<sup>21</sup> was Marks's<sup>22</sup> backer in purchase of *La Bella Mano*<sup>23</sup> — that he has been to see it at last at Chelsea with Marks and is delighted with it I dare say the cause of his visit may have been the suggestion raised through Howell about some one buying it for £1500. Now do you think I ought to let Marks know that such a person is in the field, and proposing on getting it, to place it in H's hand for sale at a very large further profit?

<sup>18</sup> Rossetti's art assistant

<sup>19</sup> There were two artists named Pinti, Constantino at 23 Howland Street, Fitzroy Square, and Raffaello at 46 Berners Street, Oxford Street I suppose one of these is meant, but I have failed to discover which

<sup>20</sup> Mr William Graham, M P for Glasgow, a patron of Rossetti's

<sup>21</sup> F S Ellis, the publisher

<sup>22</sup> Murray Marks, the art dealer

<sup>23</sup> Oil painting completed in August 1875 and purchased eventually by Ellis, although it went first to Marks

In July 1878 Rossetti was much disturbed to find that a drawing attributed to him had been bought at the shop of a London pawnbroker and art dealer, Attenborough, and that other spurious drawings were on sale at the same place. William Rossetti says <sup>24</sup> that he will not lay the blame on Howell, but that it is a fact that he was an ingenious facsimilist and was at this time associated with Rosa Corder, to whom he had taught the art of copying. Rossetti's reluctance to appear in court probably saved the pair from exposure, but it has resulted in grave doubt as to the authenticity of many reputed Rossettis in private hands <sup>25</sup>. Dr G. C. Williamson <sup>26</sup> says that a letter from Dunn written in the last year of his life complains bitterly of Howell that he had added Rossetti's monogram to two of the clever copies Dunn had made in the artist's studio, and "he is certain" Howell sold them as originals. On one well-known occasion Howell took in even Rossetti for a few minutes with a copy of one of the artist's drawings, monogram and all, and when it was discovered what he had done, Rossetti, it is said, foamed at the mouth and was incoherent with indignation. Howell had been associated with Attenborough's through his having pledged with them, at various times, quantities of his collection of blue-and-white porcelain when he needed money.

On July 8, 1878, Rossetti wrote to Watts.

*Sunday*

MY DEAR WATTS

Dunn tells me you deem it wisest to take the first step in the Attenborough matter by yourself. Could you dine with me Wednesday? — I dare say by then you will have something to say on the subject, and up to then we shd have time to consider the question of writing to Athenaeum &c

I want you to see *Fiametta framed* it looks a *ripper*.

Ever your affec.

DGR

<sup>24</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 350

<sup>25</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Rossetti, His Life and Works* (London, 1928), p. 201

<sup>26</sup> *Murray Marks and His Friends* (London, 1919), pp. 146, 155

Valpy <sup>27</sup> has returned I judge you wd not probably (though it occurs to me as he has many of my drawings and deems them well) think it worth while he shd see those in the Strand  
Dunn met Howell who looked in yesterday at Wills's — as spry and cheeky as ever.

Rossetti apparently drew up a preliminary draft <sup>28</sup> of his letter to the *Athenaeum* the next day, but the final version is dated July 16

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ATHENAEUM

My attention has been drawn to paragraphs in the papers respecting certain drawings falsely attributed to me and exposed in a shop window for sale. At the same time such a drawing has been sent me by a buyer for verification. It is spurious throughout <sup>29</sup> and bears a colourable imitation of my monogram with the date 1876. I have evidence that it was seen in Attenborough's window in the Strand, labelled as my work, and I presume it was doubtless bought there, but have not yet heard exactly. I know in any case that there exist at Attenborough's other drawings similarly attributed to me

*16 Cheyne Walk Chelsea 9 July '78* D. G. ROSSETTI

With Watts's aid and more information at hand, the letter was written, and appeared on July 20

#### A WARNING

*16, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, July 16, 1878*

The other day I had submitted to me for verification a drawing of a female head. It had been bought by a gentleman as my work

<sup>27</sup> L R Valpy, a London solicitor, who began about 1867 commissioning Rossetti paintings

<sup>28</sup> In the possession of Professor R L Purdy

<sup>29</sup> "I have evidence that it was seen" deleted

(being so labelled in the shop window) at Attenborough's, 72, Strand, and it bore in the corner a colourable imitation of my monogram, with the date 1876. I saw it at once to be spurious throughout, and gave the buyer my assurance of the fact in writing. This being shown at the shop compelled at once the return of the money. It is especially necessary that I should make this denial public, as the false drawing is far from being alone. Several similarly attributed to me have been, and may be still, at Attenborough's, — presumably pledged there as my work.

DANTE G. ROSSETTI

On July 28 the matter was still a source of worry to Rossetti, who wrote as follows.<sup>30</sup>

*Thursday*

MY DEAR WATTS

That d—d Attenborough business! What is best to do? Could you go down with Dunn, or should I be going at once? Anytime you can look in I shd be glad to see you, except to-morrow (Friday) when I am engaged.

Your affec: DGR

The next letter appears in Dr. Williamson's book, *Murray Marks and His Friends*, with the date April 12, 1875, but Dr. Williamson has written me (July 23, 1936) as follows: "It was exceedingly difficult to date Rossetti's letters, as in most cases he put no date to them, but several of them had been preserved in their envelopes, and from the envelopes I generally

<sup>30</sup> In the possession of Professor R. L. Purdy



dated them. Whether that was actually the case with the letter you quote on page 141, I cannot, after this lapse of years be quite certain, but I should think, in all probability, I did date it from an envelope, and, judging from your new material, I should imagine that the wrong envelope contained the letter. I therefore think that you may take that as the explanation of the date, because there was more than one instance of a letter that clearly belonged to a different date being put into the wrong envelope."

If the dates are straightened out, this letter explains the previous one to Watts.

MY DEAR MARKS, — I judge (from something heard by Dunn, from Ryan, the frame-maker) that A. is likely to sue Howell and that my drawing will be unpleasantly mixed up in the matter. If you will buy the drawing from A. I will either make up what you may consider its deficiencies in market value to enable you to sell it again at a profit, by giving you other drawings from those I have, or else would exchange with you for it altogether to the amount paid by you, treating you *liberally* in either case for the accommodation. I hope you are seeing about Christie's business and will let me know at once.

Ever yours

P. S. I have many good drawings by me. If you care to call here let me know when.

The affair was evidently quietly settled, as I find no further references to it.

In 1880 Rossetti was troubled by another sort of misrepresentation.

*11 Aug 1880**16 Cheyne Walk*

MY DEAR WATTS

When I last saw you I gave you a letter addressed by a firm in Chancery Lane to a friend of mine in answer to an enquiry respecting an etched portrait of me which is still advertized. In their answer it was inferred broadly that I had sat for the etching, which is not the case

You said at the time that you wd call in Chancery Lane on the subject, and I shd be obliged by your doing so.

Yours sincerely

D G ROSSETTI

*W. T. Watts Esq.*

From the formality of this letter it would appear to have been written with a view to showing it to the "firm in Chancery Lane." I have what I suppose must be one of the etchings referred to. It was done by Mortimer Mempes after the photograph by Ward and Downey, and is signed "M L Mempes 1880" It is 12" by 9", and has a slip on the back which reads. "Early proof impression signed in pencil by Mempes and D. G R." The "signature" of D. G R. could not have been meant to be a forgery originally, as it is wholly unlike Rossetti's writing. Mr F H. Day, a well-known American collector, bought this etching from Sabin, Garrick Street, Covent Garden, in 1889, and it came into my possession recently.

Rossetti was by no means wholly absorbed in his painting over these years. In 1870 his volume of poems was published, and five editions were printed during that year. He took endless trouble attending to the most minute details of its printing. The following note to his publisher is of little interest by itself, but it fits in with the letters in Mr Oswald Doughty's book, *The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to His Publisher, F S. Ellis* (1928).

[March 1870]

What a lark about Dante in  
the Yankee advertisement <sup>31</sup>

right	<i>Sunday</i>
address	<i>Scalands</i>
No Mme B	<i>Robertsbridge</i>
needed.	<i>Hawkhurst</i>
	<i>Kent</i>

DEAR ELLIS

Fly-leaf quite charming — I see no amendment needed I should say the colours to try would be Dark brown (almost black) on indigo grey, —

Indigo grey on warm white, — and perhaps Yellow Ochre or Raw Umber on the ordinary white of the book. I suppose there's no need of my returning the proof as no change is required

Ever yours D G ROSSETTI

In 1873 a Tauchnitz edition was issued, edited by Franz Hueffer Hueffer,<sup>32</sup> a German, had come to England in 1868, where he acted for some years as musical critic of the *Times*, and in 1872 he married Cathy, younger daughter of Madox Brown William Rossetti says of him that he was "equally accomplished at the pianoforte and at Schopenhauer."<sup>33</sup> He died very suddenly in 1889.

<sup>31</sup> The question of a reissue of *The Early Italian Poets* came up in May 1870, but it did not take place until 1873, when Ellis published it as *Dante and His Circle* (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 291) Ellis issued it at his own cost and halved profits with Rossetti I do not know what the "lark" was

<sup>32</sup> A jocular pronunciation of this name led Rossetti to write a limerick

There's a solid fat German called Huffer,  
Who at anything funny's a duffer  
To proclaim Schopenhauer  
From the top of a tower  
Will be the last effort of Huffer

(*Autobiographical Notes of the Life of W B Scott*, II, 189)

<sup>33</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 282.

*The Manor House Kelmscott**Lechlade**14 Sept 1871*

DEAR HUFFER

I am very glad to have you for a neighbour I can come in and swear at Schoppenhauer [*sic*] when I have the mind —

Tauchnitz by all means However, at the proposed excision of *Dante at Verona*, the spirit of Dr Johnson descends on me and I exclaim — “Sir! this is narrow prejudice! Do not think to parade before me as criticism your weak judgment and personal vanity! I think it improbable that this work is a bad one, since, were it so, you would have thought it good!”

Seriously, however, I should not like it to be omitted It is not as valuable in kind as some of the others aim at being, no doubt, but it is just as complete in its way, and surely you must be mistaken about the book being too large for a Tauchnitz volume It is wastefully printed and I feel sure you will find it short measure instead, as <sup>34</sup> it is usual for a whole English volume to get compressed into one of these,<sup>35</sup> is it not? Were there really room after all for a little more, I don’t think it would be amiss to tack on a few of the most poetic pieces from the Early Ital Poets, unless indeed they like to bring that out too! I haven’t thanked you yet for your friendly interest in the matter, but believe me I feel it nevertheless. All you do will be well done. Please use the current edition — 5th I think — as there are some changes in it, and indeed I believe I might add a few new alterations yet in the German edition when you are ready for them If you haven’t 5th Ed. — please ask Ellis for one in my name when you pass his shop.

I send (on a separate leaf) a contribution to our *Cour d’Amour* or *Cours d’Amour comparé* on the subject to which your rhymes refer

Ever yours D. G. ROSSETTI

P. S. I’m writing a longish ballad poem <sup>36</sup> — much longer than

<sup>34</sup> “The whole of most of our current vols” deleted

<sup>35</sup> “Do not” deleted

<sup>36</sup> “Rose Mary”

any in my book <sup>37</sup> — a story of my own about a magic mirror — I think I shall make it likeable, and have got some way with it.

*Kelmscott*  
*Lechlade*

*Saturday [April 4, 1874]*

MY DEAR HUFFER

I am sorry to find that there is only one spare copy of the Tauchnitz vol I will either send you it or keep it for you Could you come up Saturday next — supposing weather not to be too forbidding? You said something of coming for a Saturday-to-Monday visit first and putting off a longer one in Cathy's company to better weather Nolly <sup>38</sup> would probably come with you this time. I am writing him When I hear you can come I will let you know about trains.

With affectionate regards

Ever yours

D G ROSSETTI

His poems were much in demand for anthologies, and he was generous in permitting their use In fact, he wrote to Hall Caine in 1881 with his usual engaging candor (in reply to Caine's query about approaching the poets whose work he wished to include in *Sonnets of Three Centuries*), "Ye heavens! how does the cat's-meat-man approach Grimalkin? — and what is that relation in life compared to the *rapport* established between the living bard and the fellow-creature who is disposed to cater to his caterwauling appetite for publicity?" <sup>39</sup>

Samuel Waddington was preparing a book of sonnets by living authors, and Rossetti and Christina had been asked to contribute to it In the *Academy*, May 31, 1884, there is a letter from

<sup>37</sup> "I suppose" deleted

<sup>38</sup> Oliver Madox Brown See *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 307, for details of this visit

<sup>39</sup> Hall Caine, *Recollections of D G Rossetti* (1882), p 243

## LATER LETTERS

Mr. Waddington telling of Rossetti's choosing twelve of his own sonnets for inclusion.

21 April [1881]

DEAR SIR

Thanks for your note. By all means insert New-born Death (2) — also, if you wish, the Match with Moon — but if the latter goes in, I should be obliged if you wd balance its slightness by including also the sonnet "On Refusal of Aid etc." This wd make up the 12 I originally proposed.

In the list sent to my sister, I do not see W. B. Scott or Philip Marston. Both will no doubt be applied to.

Do you know an exquisite (though rather irregular) sonnet by Mrs. Fanny Kemble, beginning —

"Art thou already weary of the way?"

I have not seen it for many years, but it is of the noblest order for depth of feeling I met with it long ago in a cheap edition of "Poems by Mrs Butler" pubd by a bookseller named Clarke. I do not know Mrs Kemble (or Butler) personally, but as she pubd. an admirable book only last year, I suppose she is still living —

Yours truly

D G ROSSETTI

*S. Waddington Esq.*

Rossetti and Edmund Gosse first met towards Christmas, 1870, and from then onwards Gosse was one of the group of devoted young men who gathered round Rossetti at Cheyne Walk and elsewhere. One of Rossetti's most widely quoted letters was written to Gosse, in which he said that all poetry was "bound to be as *amusing* (however trivial the word may sound) as any other class of literature" <sup>40</sup> I know no more about the following letter to

<sup>40</sup> A. C. Benson, *Rossetti* (London, 1904), p. 169

him than appears on the face of it, but it shows Rossetti taking as much interest in the details of a purchase of carriage equipment as in his painting and poetry

1st Nov 1872

Kelmscott Lechlade

MY DEAR EDMUND,

You have been kept *au courant* hitherto as to Mr. Loe's views, so perhaps I need only send you on his last letter received today, just indicating that you will no doubt yourself recognize several discrepancies, among which I may mention the statement that <sup>42</sup> Mr. L first told you that *new* harness would cost £8.8/ — whereas your letter to me at the time said £5 5/ — *if not more*. He now also puts the 2 whips at 21/ — whereas he originally set them down at 7/6 each. The rug is certainly much overcharged at 16/6 — half the money wd be dear I believe, — and I suspect the waterproof Preserver at 32/6 gives a *very* good profit too. The trap itself seems reasonable, though George <sup>42</sup> just now tells me that the splash-board (if that is the correct term) shows a crack on one side which will ere long need repair. I confess myself that, being soft hearted, I am moved at heart by the capital T emphasizing the *Torrents* of rain in which Mr. Loe manfully did his duty, but at the same time George insists on obduracy. If it comes to the worst as Mr. L. states that the harness is worth £8 8/ — in the trade, suppose I offered to forfeit a sovereign and return it.

I write with this to Mr. L. merely telling him that the Preserver *did* arrive the day before yesterday, and informing him that I have sent his letter on for you that he you and Alfred may compare notes.

With kindest remembrances Ever yours D G ROSSETTI  
Private P. S.

We have got from Farrington harness that *does* fit now.

<sup>42</sup> "That you" deleted

<sup>42</sup> George Hake.

Watts was called upon to deal with a difficult situation when the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company was broken up in the autumn of 1874, Rossetti, Madox Brown, and Marshall claimed their legal share of the value of the firm. Madox Brown felt strongly justified in doing so, and Rossetti was largely motivated by loyalty to him. Watts was chosen by all to be the mediator, and William Morris wrote to him as follows

*26, Queen Square,  
Bloomsbury, London  
August 28th 1874.*

DEAR MR. WATTS

I find that two at least of our members wish to be out of the firm, so could you tell me if their leaving us should be settled before we draw up our new articles of association. I suppose myself that it ought to be so but don't know there will be no difficulties made on their side of the matter. I should tell you as to valuation of their shares

I am

Yours truly  
WILLIAM MORRIS

*26, Queen Square,  
Bloomsbury, London  
Sept 10th 1874.*

DEAR MR. WATTS

Could you (if you are in town) come here next Monday or Tuesday to talk with me and one of the outgoers about our matter. Also we want the balance-sheet to refer to if you would kindly send it to us

With apologies for troubling you

I am

Yours very truly  
WILLIAM MORRIS



Rossetti never intended to use the money obtained for himself, but set it aside for the eventual benefit of a member of the Morris family.<sup>43</sup> Through the cloak of mystery shrouding the following letter, we discern the probable beneficiary as Mrs Morris

*Friday [December 31, 1875]*

MY DEAR WATTS

I forgot to mention one point About that money invested, I think it will be better if you write direct to the owner but kindly<sup>44</sup> enclose the letter under cover to me. I would then re-enclose and send it on The reason which might make this more convenient will probably strike you.

As to re-investing the money so as to yield 5 per cent, — if you *do* think this desirable, perhaps it wd be better to effect the transfer before writing to the owner at all. Then, when writing, it might be unnecessary to name the fact of a transfer, but merely say where the money may be invested at date of writing, and how obtainable if ever possibly needed. Of all this you will be best judge

In haste                      Ever yours                      D. G. ROSSETTI

It is of course I suppose invested in the name of the real owner. If not, it may be necessary to alter this, I suppose, to place it really at disposal of the proper person If any signature is necessary, I could of course obtain it, and no doubt there might eventually be a wish to make some testamentary disposal on the subject

Watts's association with Mrs Morris continued during many years.

<sup>43</sup> Benson, *Rossetti*, p 43

<sup>44</sup> "Address" deleted

*Sunday [February 3, 1879]*

MY DEAR WATTS

Mrs M. asks me to say that in case you thought of a visit, it might be well to let her know when, as she tries to get out when she can. Of course she wd be glad to see you

I trust I may be seeing you Tuesday A doubt has crossed my mind whether it might not be better to write preparatorily to the Yankee Editor before sending the sonnets at all I shd like your views on this <sup>45</sup>

The Pandora <sup>46</sup> I finished today except for last retouching.

Your affec:

DGR

In 1843 and 1844 Rossetti boarded with the Maenzas in Boulogne. Signor Maenza was an Italian political refugee, and his wife an Englishwoman. Maenza was a teacher of drawing and Italian, as well as a water-color artist. After their marriage in 1860, Rossetti and Lizzie went to Boulogne, where they saw the Maenzas, and Lizzie was especially taken with Signor Maenza In August of that year Rossetti wrote to William. "Thanks about Maenza I have no doubt we mean the same thing, and can do nothing till I see you as I want to concoct a circular with your help . . ." <sup>47</sup> William Rossetti says that his brother's "regard for them found practical expression up to the last." <sup>48</sup> Signor Maenza died in 1870, and his wife towards 1880.

<sup>45</sup> In 1878 Watts was trying to persuade Rossetti to write again Although his first attempts to regain his power were feeble, Watts encouraged him by pretending to think them as good as ever (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 367-368)

<sup>46</sup> A crayon drawing Rossetti did three oil paintings, each called "Pandora," between 1869 and 1875

<sup>47</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 158

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, II, 19

*16 Cheyne Walk  
20 Dec 1877*

MY DEAR MRS MAENZA

I have had a 5 months' serious illness since last writing to you, and at one time thought it unlikely that I should recover sufficiently to be able to work again, at any rate for a long while. I have fared however better than I thought probable, and have now for more than a month returned to London in good working order again.

I am very glad to hear at any rate of some degree of improvement in your condition. I myself had a carbuncle between the shoulders a good many years ago, which has left a great mark to this day, and I well remember the suffering I underwent in the complaint and its treatment, so I can quite feel for you, but doubt not that it has proved eventually beneficial.

I am extremely pleased to hear of the successful concert got up by the Boulogne ladies on your behalf. No doubt your excellent husband is still remembered by many. You do not however tell me precisely how you are now situated as to funds, and what your weekly expenses are at present. Pardon my naming these points, but you may suppose that I have undergone much serious loss through so long a cessation of work, and much as I should desire if possible to continue helpful to you according to my means, I must admit that everything has to be viewed by me now with the utmost caution as to expense. Thus I could only hope to be again of some little use when quite necessary. My anxieties and embarrassment are much increased at present by the fact that my lease here expires at Lady Day next, and that it will be necessary to find a new residence which is not yet discovered. You will perceive that I have many things to think of just now. At the same time you may be sure that the welfare of so old a friend as yourself is as much desired by me now as at anytime.

With thanks for your enquiries after my family who are all well, and with best Xmas wishes, I remain

Affectionately yours

D G ROSSETTI

The matter of his lease worried Rossetti considerably, and he wrote later to Watts about it.

*19 June 1878*  
*16 Cheyne Walk*

MY DEAR WATTS

Pardon my troubling you again about the Lease, but are not Messrs Pemberton somewhat remiss in the matter? Suppose such an unfortunate casualty as Lord Cadogan's death, & what hold should we have at present on his successor for the lease which his lordship has consented to grant?

It is now only 5 days to the 24th when my present lease terminates.

Ever yours

D G ROSSETTI

*W. T. Watts Esq*

As early as 1846 Fanny Cornforth, as she called herself, appeared in Rossetti's life. She was the daughter of a blacksmith and was named Sara Cox. She married, soon after her first meeting with Rossetti, one Hughes, about whom I have no information, who died in 1872, and second, in 1879, John Bernard Schott, son of a bandmaster in the Grenadier Guards. They managed the Rose and Crown Tavern in Jermyn Street.<sup>49</sup> She served Rossetti off and on as model and mistress until 1881, when she accompanied him and Hall Caine to Cumberland in September in the

<sup>49</sup> *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, X, 169.

capacity of nurse to Rossetti. She remained for some time but left suddenly and returned to London after Hall Caine had been forced to take "a drastic step to save Rossetti from himself and his evil influences."<sup>50</sup>

In the following letter to W J Knewstub she is the person "from Jermyn Street." Knewstub had been Rossetti's professional assistant from about 1863,<sup>51</sup> when he lived for a time in the Cheyne Walk house, until 1867, when H. T. Dunn took his place. Knewstub continued to do occasional jobs for Rossetti, and this letter is evidently about some business dealing. It is transcribed by Hall Caine, but the signature, written in a faltering hand, is Rossetti's.

29 Nov./81

DEAR SIR

I have now been able to discuss your account with Mr Watts, and he takes so strongly the view that I ought to pay at least part of the interest that I feel I was wrong in objecting to it. I shall therefore send cheque for half the amount of interest shortly. Let me take this opportunity of saying how incensed I was to learn that some one from Jermyn Street had presumed to call on you to inquire whether Mr. Watts had paid you the £36. Mr. Watts's reason for delaying to pay you the money was that he and I at that moment took such entirely opposite views as to the interest, and he hoped to see me in Cumberland to try and bring me to his view.

Yours sincerely

D G. ROSSETTI

F. [*sic*] Knewstub Esq.

<sup>50</sup> Hall Caine, *Recollections of Rossetti* (London, 1928), p. 192.

<sup>51</sup> In *Rossetti Papers* (p. 223), William Rossetti says Knewstub received no salary, he seems to have been a sort of apprentice. Later (1887) he helped Ford Madox Brown in Manchester with the decoration of an exhibition building for Queen Victoria's jubilee.

Fanny Schott obtained many of Rossetti's drawings and paintings, whether by way of payment or not, and she and her husband turned them to good profit. In *Some Reminiscences*<sup>52</sup> William Rossetti writes that in 1883 there were three exhibitions of Rossetti's work, one by the Academy, one at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, and one in Bond Street, and that his connection with the last was nil. This was got up by Mr. Schott. He apparently had a gallery at Number 12, Old Bond Street, which he called "The Rossetti Gallery." I have cards engraved with the name and address and "Schott and Co. Publishers" on them, also stationery, and a notice that Mr. John Bernard Schott will receive orders for proofs and prints of a portrait of Rossetti by George Frederick Watts. There is an engraved card of invitation to a private view on May 5, 1883, of the third exhibition of the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The situation is, like several others in Rossetti's life, one that needs clarifying. I have a sixth edition of the *Poems* of 1870 with an inscription in Rossetti's hand. "To John B. Schott from Dante G. Rossetti with friendly regards. 28th June 1878."

I cannot date the following letter, but it is probably after 1878, at least.

16 Cheyne Walk  
Monday

SIR

The oil picture and some of the drawings by me which Mr. Schott has are good things. They are his property, not mine.

When you sent a half-done sketch here for guarantee, I expressed surprise, not annoyance, at your dealing in anything so trivial. I have not guaranteed any work since, nor shd I do so except in case of something important. The guarantee of work from my own studio is direct.

Yrs

D G ROSSETTI

Rossetti retained an affection for Fanny to the end of his life. A bulletin of her health was sent to Watts in November 1878.

*Monday*

MY DEAR WATTS

If you like to see the last of Mrs S.<sup>53</sup> she is likely to be here tomorrow (Tuesday aftn ) Poor F is better through the agency of laughing gas and a dentist.

Ever yours DGR

Hall Caine reports that only a few days before his death, Rossetti asked solicitously about her,<sup>54</sup> and in a letter to Caine he speaks of her with a suggestion of gratitude:

*Sunday [1881]*

MY DEAR [CAINE]<sup>55</sup>

I was sincerely grieved that you have suffered in health The lecture reads most capitally. Pray take care of yourself till we can meet again. Fanny has never left me, and you may see by my hand that I am somewhat improved though still a good deal of a sufferer

I see Leyland<sup>56</sup> was at the reception.

The garden is finished but I am not yet at work again — I am so weak.

Let me hear from you in due course. Mrs. Baker<sup>57</sup> shall forward your papers

Your affec

DGR

<sup>53</sup> This may be Mrs G rather than Mrs S In any case I have failed to identify her

<sup>54</sup> *Recollections of Rossetti* (1928), p 248

<sup>55</sup> Ink eradicator has been used on the name, but it is still discernible

<sup>56</sup> Frederick R Leyland, a shipowner and art patron of Liverpool, for whom Whistler painted the famous "Peacock Room"

<sup>57</sup> One of Rossetti's servants

I reproduce a curious memento of the relationship between Rossetti and Fanny in the form of an IOU On the verso in pencil is a note in an unidentified hand, "By Howell Facsimile of destroyed (?) IOU paid by Wm Rossetti to Fanny Schott." The word "facsimile" is a misnomer It is apparently a tracing.

*Mrs Susan Hughes  
36 Royal Avenue  
Chelsea*

*IOU*

*Three Hundred Pounds*

*DG Rossetti:*

*16 Cheyne Walk Chelsea  
23 March 1875*

ROSSETTI'S IOU TO FANNY SCHOTT



## VI

### ROSSETTI AND MISS LOSH

IN 1868, when Rossetti visited Miss Alice Boyd at Penkill Castle, the party included, besides the William Bell Scotts, an elderly cousin of Miss Boyd's, a Miss Losh. This lady was quite evidently fascinated by Rossetti's charms, to the great annoyance of Scott, who shows himself at his most acrimonious in dealing with the affair in his *Autobiographical Notes*.<sup>1</sup> The only facts which have been published, to my knowledge, about the matter are Scott's account and William Rossetti's in his memoir<sup>2</sup> of his brother, in which he defends him against Scott's diatribe. They are agreed that Miss Losh offered to lend Rossetti enough money to make him independent of painting until his eyes, which were causing him much anxiety at the time, should be completely restored to normal. According to Scott, Rossetti told him of the offer, saying that, of course, he would not avail himself of it, to which Scott replied he should think not, or words to that effect, and until the death of Miss Losh in 1872 revealed an IOU for an unspecified amount still owing by Rossetti, he supposed it had gone no further. William Rossetti in his diary for November 3, 1868, wrote: "Gabriel came back tonight from Penkill . . . She [Miss Losh] pressed Gabriel (whom she had never known before) most urgently to accept a loan of £1,000, to keep his affairs in a comfortable condition in case of his having to intermit work. He had much ado to stave off this offer; and she has positively made him accept a £100 loan, for which the cheque is to reach him directly."<sup>3</sup>

In his memoir of Dante Gabriel, William Rossetti adds "I would not dispute that he ought, at some time before the death of a benefactress who would take no denial, to have made an

<sup>1</sup> II, 108 ff

<sup>2</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, pp 267-268

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 268

opportunity for repaying the loan, but her death as I have said, was sudden, and between November, 1868, and March, 1872, there may have been communications passing between the two, unknown both to Mr. Scott and to myself" <sup>4</sup>

Here are at least some of these communications. I think that no letters between Rossetti and Miss Losh have ever been published. Evelyn Waugh in *Rossetti, His Life and Works* <sup>5</sup> writes of the reports of Scott and W. M. Rossetti, and says the incident seems to him typical of Rossetti and not particularly discreditable. In the light of these letters, it appears that Miss Losh was certainly not pressing Rossetti for a return of the loan, he was one who knew how to make excuses if they were needed, as may be seen from any of his letters to impatient picture-buyers who wanted their pictures, or their money, and could get neither, but here he seems quite at his ease and in his most attractive vein.

The years in which these letters were written were the most interesting of Rossetti's life. He was passionately in love, and the exhumation of his poems was followed by a period of tremendous creative activity. He wrote sixty-four of the *House of Life* sonnets between 1869 and 1871, his book of poems was published and reviewed in 1870-1871; and during this time he was also painting some of his greatest pictures.

The first letter was written a week after Rossetti's return from his visit at Penkill.

9<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1868

DEAR MISS LOSH,

I am sending some photographs tomorrow to Miss Boyd, and want to beg your acceptance also of some which I shall enclose with hers. Since my return, my eyes are about the same. Everything else has been all right, both as to health and the events of this chequered existence —

I called on Topsy <sup>6</sup> who was howling and threatening to throw a new piano of his wife's out of window. It unfortunately arrived

<sup>4</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family Letters*, I, 267-268

<sup>5</sup> Page 149

<sup>6</sup> William Morris.

I believe just at dinner time and the occurrence had poisoned his peace of mind ever since

I have written to M Ernest Chesneau,<sup>7</sup> the author of that book on Art, and set him right about myself, Scotus,<sup>8</sup> and others. So I shall now return his book to you (you need not hesitate to keep it, as I find another copy was sent to my brother) and at the same time shall send you a copy of my own Italian Poets, if I can get it in time for the parcel tomorrow. If not, it shall follow.

Calling on Scotus the other day, I insisted on seeing that Forbidden Fruit which he snatched in the Eden of Leicester Square.<sup>9</sup> He professed not to know which it was of a set he had, but I recognized it by an extra amount of affectionate rubbing and mending which it had evidently undergone.

When the large sketch book arrives, I wish Miss Boyd and you to study Scotus in various favourite characters as performed by him in early life. Unfortunately we have no pictorial record of him in a later rapid act at Puttick and Simpson's, but that has doubtless been photographed by the Recording Angel and retained in an important collection which will one day but too surely come to the hammer and be knocked down (together it is to be feared with the originals) at very doubtful rates indeed. Now don't on any account bother to answer this but believe me

Most truly yours

D. G. ROSSETTI

By a somewhat fortuitous circumstance the only two letters which could have been used to *prove* Rossetti's borrowing are unsigned. the first is written on ordinary note paper, not his own monogrammed stationery, and the second is on a scrap of thin paper, roughly torn from a larger sheet.

<sup>7</sup> French critic, author of *Les Nations rivales dans l'art*. Rossetti wrote to him on November 7, 1868. See *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 128.

<sup>8</sup> W. B. Scott

<sup>9</sup> See *ante*, p. 44

*16 Cheyne Walk  
Chelsea  
21st Dec<sup>r</sup> 1868*

MY DEAR MISS LOSH,

When you made me the most friendly offer of assistance I ever received in my life, I told you that only the fear of never doing you justice in the matter, through my declining eyesight, prevented me from frankly accepting it in such degree as I could feel sure of repaying — I have now, for some little time past, made the experiment of working, and have no reason, I believe, to fear being prevented from continuing with such regularity (even allowing for necessary caution) as may set my mind at rest with regard to my prospects for the present. Mr. Bowman, the oculist, whom I have again consulted, assures me that he has no apprehension as to my sight, and I have recommenced regular work, with, as you may suppose, great satisfaction. I do not however wish to overdo exertion for some time to come, and so run the risk of a relapse into total inertia, and with this aim in view, I am induced to propose availing myself still further than I have already done of your most kind offer — that is, to the extent of an additional sum of £400, making in all £500 received. This would assist me more, at the present moment, in one sum, than by instalments at intervals; and I may add that it would be the last time (I trust for certain) that I should be trespassing on you — I could reasonably hope to repay it, if not entirely within the coming year, at any rate with no very great further delay; and it would enable me, with the many present claims on my purse which have resulted from my enforced inaction, to refrain from overworking myself to meet them, and to enter without hurry on a steady resumption of painting. In saying this, at the same time, I feel it is highly possible that the interval which has elapsed since I declined the greater part of what you so generously proposed to

lend me, may have caused you to form other plans not compatible with the offer being renewed — Were this to prove the case, I should know equally well how entirely sincere and unreserved was the feeling with which it was made. I have heard repeatedly, from Miss Boyd and Scott, respecting your health, and rejoice extremely to understand that you are now much as usual, after the severe attack of which I was told. I wish you would make up your mind to a New Year's trip to London. We are instituting a habit of whist-playing both here and at Elgin Road,<sup>10</sup> and you would have every opportunity of exercising the powers of scrutiny which you bring to bear on that game. At any rate, if you do not come to this determination, I shall hope to renew our whist-parties at Penkill earlier next year, and so get a sight of the beautiful scenery at its richest time.

Some of my bad symptoms have lessened most decidedly since I last wrote to you.<sup>11</sup>

The next note was folded small, and around it was wrapped a piece of paper torn from a stockholders' printed report. This, in turn, was folded and sealed with a bit of red wax, and written on the outside in a tremulous hand, presumably Miss Losh's. "No use I am afraid except to me. 1868."

Rossetti's unsigned note reads:

Many and many thanks for your letter received this morning. I note all you say, but trust to make all well long before your melancholy forebodings come true for either of us — and I believe they are just as likely for me as for you — You have done me the greatest service I could have received at this moment, and I confess that my first feeling this morning is one of shame at

<sup>10</sup> Scott's house

<sup>11</sup> The letter ends here at the foot of the fourth page.

many and many thanks  
for your letter received  
this morning. I note all  
you say, but trust to make  
all well long before your  
melancholy forebodings can  
time for either of us -  
and I believe they are  
just as true for me as  
for you. You have done  
me the greatest service I  
could have received at this  
moment; and I confess  
that my first feeling this  
morning is one of shame  
at having availed myself of  
so much generosity; but my  
utmost effort will be to avoid  
all risk to you and yours before  
long.

My dear  
I am afraid  
it is too late  
me. 1858

NOTE FROM D. G. ROSSETTI TO MISS LOSH



having availed myself of so much generosity, but my utmost effort will be to avert all risk to you and yours before long<sup>12</sup>

This seems to have been saved by Miss Losh with care as the only evidence she had, but, in that case, what of the IOU that William Bell Scott and William Rossetti both mention?<sup>13</sup> Rossetti may, of course, have been induced to give her one during the next six months, a period during which I have no correspondence. Some letters must certainly have been written, for he would scarcely have left his creditor with no news in the first flush of his gratitude and then have begun half a year later to write to her quite regularly.

*16 Cheyne Walk — Chelsea*  
*16 July 1869*

MY DEAR MISS LOSH,

Thanks for your most kind note Had I been on the move just now, you would have heard from me already, as I was far from having forgotten your kind invitation — But I cannot just at present say when it may be possible for me to leave London, though I hope it may be ere very long I am already beginning to feel a good deal in want of a change I have been, I suppose I must say, a good deal better for some time now, though perhaps the improvement consists more in having made up my mind to the unavoidable than in anything else — However it is consolatory to find that there is no further absolute deterioration for some time past, and I do not now that I am used to it experience any decided inconvenience in work of the kind I do. In point of success I have nothing to complain of — indeed much to be grate-

<sup>12</sup> Reproduction of letter, facing p 84

<sup>13</sup> William Rossetti (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 267) says, "It was destroyed in my brother's interest by a friendly hand — I will not say whose" Evelyn Waugh (*Rossetti, His Life and Works*, p 149) states that the IOU was destroyed by the executors of Miss Losh's estate



ful for. It is encouraging to see by your handwriting that your eyes must have resumed their usual duties I hope you are benefiting by this warm weather, which I confess I find for the last few days a little too warm

I have become (for me) quite a diner-out, and have gone among friends and acquaintances more this season than for some seasons past

You will be grieved to hear that poor Janey Morris is very ill She and her husband are going to Ems on the Rhine, where she has been told to go and drink the waters and take baths. Topsy goes on working at a prodigious rate at the second vol of his *Earthly Paradise*, and is making it so bulky that it will have to come out in 2 divisions, the first of which will appear I suppose about October One day lately, working from 10 one morning to 4 the morning after (with intervals of meals etc) he produced 750 lines! — and this of the finest poem he has yet done

The Royal Academy is a poor one this year in my opinion. Millais however is in splendid strength.<sup>24</sup> The greatest picture of the year in my opinion is Burne-Jones's "Circe" at the old Water-colour Gallery. At the Academy Scotts' [*sic*] watercolour (The rending of the Temple veil) looks very fine and has been much admired. Miss Boyd was, as you probably know, unlucky with a picture which she sent of the Wild Huntsman, and has since sent it to an Exhibition opened in Bond Street

I have been much thrown out in my work by poor Janey's illness as I was engaged on several pictures for which she was sitting to me. I have now taken to finishing another one (*Sibylla Palmifera* <sup>25</sup>) which has been a long while lying by, and am bringing it to a conclusion. When I come to Penkill, I believe I shall take it with me and carry on a duplicate of it at intervals there, as I have

<sup>24</sup> Millais had four pictures in the exhibition

<sup>25</sup> Miss Wilding was the model

been tempted by a handsome offer to undertake the not very pleasant task of reproducing it on the original scale

I hoped you might have got before this to Penkill while Christina remains there. At any rate I trust you will be there in my time to renew your inexorable supervision of the Whist table. With kindest remembrances

I am ever sincerely yours

D G ROSSETTI

P. S. I see lying on the table a magazine<sup>16</sup> containing a poem by my brother which may interest you to read, so I send it.

Rossetti must have left for Penkill on August 17, as he wrote to his mother on the twenty-first "I left London on Tuesday, and spent two nights and a day at old Miss Losh's house near Carlisle, where, as you may be sure, she made me very comfortable"<sup>17</sup> This letter to his mother contains a final paragraph which is of special interest taken in connection with Chapter VII, since we know that Rossetti had written Howell on August 16<sup>18</sup> that he had made up his mind to open his wife's grave to regain his manuscripts "I am printing some old and new poems — chiefly old — for private circulation, and shall send them you of course when the proofs are complete To-day I am calling-in William's valuable aid for revision. My object is to keep them by me as stock to be added to for a possible future volume, but in any case I thought it necessary to print them, as I found blundered transcripts of some of my old things were flying about, and would at some time have got into print perhaps, — a thing afflictive to one's bogie."

*Penkill — Friday [August 19, 1869]*

DEAR MISS LOSH

I reached here all right yesterday, and found everything looking perfect except your chair in the chimney corner, which had an

<sup>16</sup> The *Broadway Magazine* (or *Annual*) with "Mrs Holmes Grey"

<sup>17</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 202 <sup>18</sup> See Chapter VII, p 115

empty aspect still open to correction. Miss Boyd tells me to tell you how decidedly this is her view of the subject and how soon she hopes it will be remedied by your becoming visible in the reserved seat. There is plenty of room for both you and old Brown<sup>19</sup> who has been written to by me with this as another defaulter. Miss Boyd repudiates the whole charge connected with her night journey, as the family could not possibly have reached her within the time for the proposed greeting, unless by a certainty of incurring colds catarrhs and asthmas, to say nothing of doctor's bills. As for her reaching the family, that was still more impossible in so short and uncomfortable a halt. So you are to bear no malice whatever.

I hope I did not inconvenience Mr. Wm Losh very much by accepting his kind offer to drive me to the station before he started on his own journey

I have got my proofs here and am tattooing them in the usual agonized state which such things bring me to. As soon as I get a complete set I will send it to you — no I wont — I will keep it for you till you come here.

With affectionate remembrances

I am most sincerely yours

D G ROSSETTI

Rossetti and his brother now began a very active correspondence about the poems. On August 26 Rossetti wrote to him of an article in *Tinsley's* and called it "gratifying,"<sup>20</sup> although to his mother he says merely that it is satisfactory that "after twenty years one stranger has discovered one's existence."<sup>21</sup> In a letter to Madox Brown he calls it "encouraging,"<sup>22</sup> and he mentions

<sup>19</sup> See *Rossetti Papers*, p. 452, for this letter to Ford Madox Brown

<sup>20</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 205

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206

<sup>22</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 458

the matter in all his letters in one way or another He does not fail to bring it to Miss Losh's notice in the next letter

*Penkill Castle  
Girvan  
Ayrshire*

*28 August 1869*

MY DEAR MISS LOSH

A magazine has been sent me which I send on to you by book post, as it contains something about me and I know your kind interest in my doings I do not know who is the writer, but have been led to believe it is a man named Forman,<sup>23</sup> a stranger to me There was an article in the August number on Christina, and from what was there said I judge there will be one in the October number on William. So you see the writer means to "do" the family thoroughly.

I have been working at my proofs and adding to them. Shall send a set when finished

But why dont you come? The weather here is lovely, only almost too hot for walking, even in my opinion As for Scotus, you may imagine the double-distilled drone that *he* becomes in such a state of the atmosphere Last night for the first time we attempted a rubber, but it had to be done with the pale shadow of Dummy occupying your vacant place, and was accordingly but a sad reminder of better days

Scotus has read us his book on Albert Durer right through in the evenings. He seems in composing it to have been seized every now and then with his constitutional somnolence but to have gone on writing all the same. Accordingly after waking from a nap he generally found that the leading incident of the portion in hand had been left out, and these have had to be heaped together

<sup>23</sup> H Buxton Forman.

in an Appendix. The arrangement may be thought peculiar, but of course (seriously speaking) the book is a most excellent and most interesting one.

Two policemen were seen wandering in this neighbourhood lately. Owing to Scotus's want of hair, it could not betray him by standing on end so the bobbies overlooked what was doubtless the object of their visit.<sup>24</sup> Miss Boyd, who is very well sends love, as does Scotus

Most sincerely yours  
D G ROSSETTI

On September 2, Rossetti sent the proofs of his poems to the printers, and on the twelfth he received a corrected set from them. However, he wrote to William that he was still working on them and had done "various things."<sup>25</sup>

*Penkill*  
*Sunday [September 12, 1869]*

DEAR MISS LOSH,

I expect to be leaving here on Thursday next which will complete the month since I arrived. I have been extremely sorry to hear, through what Mrs Kemmis wrote to Miss Boyd, of your fresh attack of illness so shortly after I last saw you. As she has not heard again, we do not know whether you are better. I therefore write to Mr W Losh's, in case your indisposition should have led to your going there.

If you can be my hostess again on my way to London, I shall be thankful as before, and am anxious to see for myself how you are now. In that case I need not trouble you to let me know, but will turn up in due course — If however you are not at Ravenside,

<sup>24</sup> See *ante*, p. 44

<sup>25</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 214

or if you are unfortunately too unwell still to receive a visitor, will you let me know by Wednesday evening I suppose of course there is time for a letter to reach, even between Wreay and Penkill which form a sort of postal Scylla and Charybdis If you are not able to say up to the last moment, perhaps you would kindly send me a telegram in time. However I am in hopes of finding you improved again, and with kind remembrances to all yours,

am yours very sincerely

D G. ROSSETTI

P. S. Miss Boyd sends love and is very anxious to know how you are. W. B.<sup>26</sup> joins in same. As far as we can make out Bradshaw it seems I shall reach Carlisle at 7 28 and I suppose it takes another hour to get to your "diggings" — So I fear I shall be rather an untimely arrival.

*Penkill*

*Wednesday [September 15, 1869]*

DEAR MISS LOSH

I have been led to the advisability of staying here a few days longer, and do not expect to get away before Monday or Tuesday. All would be most delightful here were it not for the changeable weather we are getting now

I suppose by not hearing from you that you are better and kindly ready to receive me. So I write to Ravenside. I will again notify to you my precise movements in due course.

All here send their love, and I am

most sincerely yours

D G ROSSETTI

This same day Rossetti wrote to William that he was "in a rather productive mood," and that he had written several new

<sup>26</sup> Scott

things<sup>27</sup> William Bell Scott's account of this Penkill visit pictures Rossetti in the depths of gloom, trying to nerve himself to commit suicide, maintaining that a young bird which allowed itself to be taken in his hand was the spirit of his dead wife, and generally conducting himself like one mentally unbalanced. This view is not supported by Rossetti's letters, or by the work he accomplished during this period. Scott was obviously not in his confidence at this time, for he writes that "Rossetti suddenly decided to reclaim the manuscript book buried with his wife . . . In a few days he was gone"<sup>28</sup> From the letters written to Howell,<sup>29</sup> it is plain that Rossetti was negotiating the arrangements for the exhumation the whole time he was at Penkill.

*Tuesday [September 21, 1869]  
16 Cheyne Walk  
Chelsea*

MY DEAR MISS LOSH,

I duly reached here last night at 9 30 after a very rapid and punctual journey. I find everything as it should be, and even better. My servants have been exerting themselves wonderfully and have cleaned and even painted the house to a most satisfactory state of polish. My tent however has had to be taken down, as it seems the winds here were at one time something tremendous. I have seen no one as yet except the parrot and the Wombat<sup>30</sup> who are on either side of me as I write — the former letting fall a remark — or shall I say an animadversion? — from time to time, — and the latter burrowed deep in the sofa cushions indulging apparently in the more abstruse forms of thought. He is a round furry ball with a head something between a bear and a guinea-pig, no legs, human feet with heels like anybody else, and no tail. Of course I shall call him "Top." His habits are most

<sup>27</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 218

<sup>28</sup> W B Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, II, 117

<sup>29</sup> Chapter VII

<sup>30</sup> The wombat died in September 1871

endearing. He follows one about everywhere and sidles up and downstairs along the wall with the greatest activity. He is but a babe as yet and very rough as to his coat which however is splendidly thick. The Consummate Wombat is quite smooth, and such he will be when adult. He is tremendously strong and heroically good-natured. I know you would pronounce him a perfect darling.

Of course I have no news at present but thought I would make sure of writing before that dreadful letter of yours reaches me from Penkill. However, you know I have promised to burn it unopened.

I see the Tinsley article on William is out, and is rather severe on Mrs. Holmes Grey.<sup>31</sup> They are not quite wrong about its defects, but then they are obtuse to its merits.

I hope to be sending you some proofs in a forward state soon, and with kind remembrances to all at Ravenside and Wreay, am ever

most sincerely yours

D. G. ROSSETTI

I cannot find any confirmation that Rossetti stopped to see Miss Losh on his way to London, but I suppose from the second paragraph of the preceding letter that he must have done so and that they came to some further understanding.

*8th Oct 1869*

*16 Cheyne Walk Chelsea*

MY DEAR MISS LOSH

I have got the proofs now in a state to which I shall not be adding for at any rate some weeks to come, and so I send them you

<sup>31</sup> A letter in my possession from W M Rossetti to Gleeson White in 1887 says "The only narrative poem of mine is a longish blank verse composition 'Mrs Holmes Grey' wh was published in 'The Broadway' magazine in 1868 and reproduced in 'The Broadway Annual' soon afterwards. It is a performance, dated 1849, of a very peculiar kind in the realistic direction." See p 199



with this by book post <sup>32</sup> You will see that "Eden Bower," which I began at Ravenside, is among them. Should it happen (which is improbable) that any one, not belonging to your immediate family, wished to borrow the poems, I would be obliged if you would refrain from lending them I am only giving away 3 copies (yours, one to Miss Boyd, and another,) and have now so made up my mind to publish a volume next spring, that I shall not, as I at first intended, be having any more copies printed for private circulation — I find that with the things I am going to write now, and those I shall still be able to recover from old rough copies,<sup>33</sup> I shall have a volume of about 400 pages ready in the spring if all goes well

I have been in better health since returning to town, and find all friends well Topsy goes on writing at a furious rate, but the Second Volume of the Earthly Paradise will not I believe appear till December, and there is to be yet another volume after that.

I sent some blue pots to Penkill the other day Scotus is to construct a shelf projecting all round the sloping hood of the dining-room fireplace, and the blue pots are to figure on it The edge of the shelf will not project further than the furthest projection of the hood, so that people's brainpans will not be more in danger than now.

I hope you go on improving and that all yours are well, and with kindest regards

am most sincerely yours

D. G. ROSSETTI

On October 5 the manuscripts were recovered from the grave, and Rossetti broke the news of the exhumation to William, on October 16 he went to see the book at Dr Williams's, where it

<sup>32</sup> This would be the first issue of the Trial Book without the exhumed poems

<sup>33</sup> Euphemistic phrase decided upon by D G R to designate the exhumed MSS

was being disinfected, and on the twentieth he obtained possession of what was left of it.

*19 Oct. 1869*

MY DEAR MISS LOSH

I feared the cause of my not hearing from you till today — knowing as I do your kind punctuality in writing (though of course in this instance there was no call for an answer at once) — and am most sorry to hear how unwell you have been again. Still, there is the encouragement of finding that your present letter is not invalidated either in matter or manner I really feel guilty in having sent you a means of perhaps trying your eyes prematurely, knowing as I do (and am so glad to do) the interest you take in my verses

I enclose you a sketch sent me by W. B <sup>34</sup> of the arrangement of the Blue Pots at Penkill Miss Boyd gives a glowing account of their effect. You will observe Miss Boyd and easily supply the opposite figure of Scotus in the act of sketching, the wine of the country, as proper to the hour inscribed in the corner, is not forgotten In the embrasure of the window are the two sacred vessels full of sea-water, one containing a fish of a mystic order caught at Girvan by Miss B and Christina in a hair-net, and the other a small but portentous crab, a perfect “pieuvre” <sup>35</sup> of voracity, obtained I believe on the same occasion. Considering that I have several hundred pieces of blue still left, you will think with me that these few were not ill bestowed for the embellishment of Penkill, particularly when the triumphant result is apparent Miss Boyd, as you perhaps know, has been staying for a few days with an aunt at some place with a name something like Ryndeggan (?) but is now I believe back at Penkill. She appears to have had fearful weather in travelling. To-day, as I write,

<sup>34</sup> W B Scott

<sup>35</sup> Devilfish, bloodsucker

Cheyne Walk might be Black Gung Chine for the riotous winds that possess and belabour it Ravenside doubtless fares the same I should myself have had the Poems bound before sending them to you, were it not that they form only a portion of what will be in print before I hope very long. A good deal will now be added shortly, (being old poems recovered from rough copies,<sup>36</sup>) and more yet remains to be composed which is brewing in my head and partly sketched out on paper. I hope, but am not certain, that I may be ready with all I wish to include by next Spring. Whenever I *am* ready I shall publish immediately, and feel at present just in the mood to sit down and do nothing but write till all is got together and this poetic question disposed of for the present. However, this may not be I must not neglect my painting, and am even now putting in hand two works of more extended subject than the works I have lately done When I publish poetry, I may very possibly take a fancy to exhibit some pictures about the same time.

I am glad you were not disappointed with the "Eden" poem, of which Ravenside saw the natal hour The "Nineveh" I reckon on as destined probably to be the most generally popular thing in the book. I do not regard it with indifference myself, but am inclined to give the preference to the more emotional order of subject. The "Blessed Damozel" and a few others will also I think please pretty generally, but I am well aware that the greater proportion of my poetry is suited only to distinctly poetic readers. To this class belong what I think perhaps the most of myself — that is, the Sonnets, and none more than the one you mention, called *A Superscription* This is decidedly (painful as it is) a favourite of my own. Nothing I ever wrote was more the result of strong feeling, as you may perhaps think retraceable in it. There are a good many new Sonnets in these sheets, and some

<sup>36</sup> Cf. p 94, n 33

which I hope may please you. The "Farewell to the Glen" towards the end, I wrote the day before I left Penkill. On reading it over at home I thought it very dismal but still it would have been a pity to exclude it. I believe Scott must have returned to London yesterday, but do not as yet know when Miss Boyd is expected. When are *you* coming? Do not on any account think of answering this or any other question at present (unless to the above you can say *At once*) but pray observe entirely the best means to avoid a fresh attack of illness.

Will you remember me most kindly to all yours, and believe me  
yours affectionately

D. G. ROSSETTI

It is interesting to find that Rossetti actually wrote the "Farewell to the Glen" before he left Penkill. However, he wrote to Miss Boyd after his return to London for details to use in the poem "The Stream's Secret."

"I meant to have asked you in my note yesterday whether you could bring to mind any feature or incident particularly characteristic of the Penkill glen at nightfall. In my poem I have made the speaker towards the close suddenly perceive that the night is coming on, and have had to give a descriptive touch or two. I expect a first proof in all probability to-morrow morning, so if I get a hint of any kind from you by next day (Friday) it would be in time to insert before I sent back the proof with revisions and possible additions." <sup>37</sup>

The letter which followed this was first published in 1928 in an article in the *Fortnightly Review* for May by John Purves, and begins

"Thanks for reminding me of the glen's leading characteristic, which I ought to have remembered. I have remodelled from it the only descriptive stanza which I find this part of the poem will bear, and find it greatly the gainer."

<sup>37</sup> William Sharp, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London, 1882), pp. 334-335.

From now on Rossetti was absorbed in his preparations for publication, questions of binding, color, flyleaves, and the forthcoming reviews of the *Poems*, but these things do not explain the absence of all correspondence throughout 1870. Rossetti wrote to Professor Norton <sup>38</sup> early in this year that he had done no work because he had felt so "out-of-sorts," and in April he told Brown <sup>39</sup> that neither Brown nor anyone else realized the extent to which his eyesight interfered with his work. "Every moment is an effort." He was chiefly engaged in painting "Dante's Dream," and by August 1870 he was able to write to Frederic Shields <sup>40</sup> that a big picture was "glorious work, really rousing to every faculty one has . . . I am not at present sensible of any inconvenience with my eyes . . ."

The next letter shows his philosophical attitude towards the notices of his poems. An unfavorable review appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* shortly after publication, of which Rossetti wrote to Shields <sup>41</sup> that he was surprised to find how fleeting was the momentary impression of unpleasantness — he might almost say none at all. In 1855, in writing to William Allingham about *Maud*, he had expressed the greatest wonder and surprise at Tennyson's preoccupation with the unfavorable reviews and comments on his poems. He said that "the idea of literary cabals under which he is destined to sink one day never seemed to leave his mind." This was in great contrast to Browning, who "treats reviewers in the way they deserve" <sup>42</sup>. Rossetti's own attitude at this time was one of healthy scorn, and it is ironic to read his comments on Tennyson's state of mind in the light of his own later development.

11 Jan. 1871  
16 Cheyne Walk  
Chelsea

DEAR MISS LOSH

It is not too late in the New Year to wish you happiness and health in the course of it, and accordingly here comes the wish

<sup>38</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 512

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527

<sup>40</sup> *The Life and Letters of Frederic Shields* (London, 1912), p. 144

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143

<sup>42</sup> M. L. Howe, in *Modern Language Notes*, May 1934, pp. 292-293

expressed by one who, he fears, must have seemed neglectful, but has been endlessly preoccupied since last writing.

I was glad to hear from Miss Boyd last night that you were better again, after the very sad account I had of you from her only a short time ago. This weather has been dreadfully trying to everyone. I should have written at once on hearing of your illness, but I wished to accompany my letter with a "Westminster Review" containing a long notice of my poems which has just appeared — But not being able to send it quite yet, I write beforehand now and will send it in a few days — It gives a very fair idea I think of the position the book takes by this time with those by whom it is found readable — There is blame as well as praise, but still the praise predominates and is I think (as far as one can be one's own judge) in the right direction. I have had of course a great number of notices good and bad (of which I will send you some with the Westminster if I can lay my hands on any — my mother has a lot I think) The book has reached a 5th edition now in its 9th month of existence, so assuredly I have nothing to complain of —

Morris has at last finished his *Earthly Paradise*, with the most triumphant success, the first 1000 of vol. 4, having been bespoke before publication — He is becoming so well known as Morris that one is almost liable to forget his being Topsy until his presence brings the fact vividly into prominence — He still shows healthy signs however in the latter character. Lately he was known to hang on to the bell-pull at dinner-time for at least 10 minutes, and when one calls on him, one is occasionally informed by the servant from the area that it is no good knocking at the front door, as that will not open since Master last banged it, but that one must come round by the back way. So you see Topsy is extant yet, in spite of the fame of Morris.

You really ought to come to Chelsea now that you have no less

than 2 houses of call there so close to each other as this and Bellevue House <sup>43</sup> — I suppose you have received full accounts of the latter from Miss Boyd since her return — I find she did not see you on her way back from Scotland, as she was very much regretting that some misunderstanding as to your whereabouts had prevented her making the half-way pause — She has been the victim of constant colds ever since, and is only now beginning to get a little round, but still wears a respirator when she goes out — Unfortunately Bellevue House is not calculated to help her in this respect, as it certainly seems to be the most inveterately cold place in winter that I was ever in. The last time I went there for whist we really could not persuade ourselves to leave the fire and get round the whist-table. Some strenuous measures will have to be taken to remedy this evil — I tell Scotus that he will have to adopt gas in the rooms, but whereas, at Elgin Road, he used to bake one to a cinder with gas in the height of summer, here he will not have it at all except in the dining room for some good reason or other of his own. As yet all he has done to warm the rooms is the fitting up of some screens and curtains in the studio, which I fear will hardly do the trick. Of course the house, except in this respect, is a most delightful one — indeed as roomy and picturesque an old mansion as one could meet with even in the country. Its garden is a curiosity, being a long slip of ground *opposite* the house on the other side of the roadway, and leading down to the river side. Thus I fear it is not likely to be much used, though well walled in for privacy when you are once in it. It would be just the thing for any man who went out rowing, to keep a boat in, but Scotus does not disport himself on the Silver Thames by moonlight. Besides this there is a famous vinery at the back of the house, but no garden. Of course proximity promotes intercourse between our two houses, and we have now

<sup>43</sup> Scott's residence.

established regular evenings for alternate visits and whist. Our fourth is sometimes Boyce the landscape-painter who has built himself a house of the Topsaic pattern in red brick close by here, but Dummy still frequently occupies his serene and passionless place at our table. Of course the luxury of planning and working out arrangements in Bellevue House is still far from over for its inmates, and Scotus exists all day long in that Paradise of pottering, which as you know is so sweet to him.

I have told you nothing of my work as yet, but I have not for the last 2 years worked nearly so hard as during the latter half of last year, since I got on to my big picture — “Dante’s Dream” The difficulty with my eyesight seems now at an end for the present — that is, the disturbance in the sight which interfered with my work, — the sight itself is much weakened since the attack, but spectacles remedy the evil, and all opinions assure me that I have no cause to fear in any worse sense — Last Spring I suffered again a good deal with my eyes, but since then they have been steadily strengthening and I have had no difficulty in keeping constantly at work. I have even worked a good deal in the evenings since the short days set in. Accordingly, as you may suppose, I have got through a great deal of painting, both in the finishing of work which had been hanging on hand during my long seediness, and in progress with the large picture which is now approaching completion. It is 10 feet by 7 and has 5 figures in it, life size. I am painting it for Mr. Graham, M.P. for Glasgow. I need not say what delight I have felt in my work lately after such long anxiety as to the future, and I think the work itself has eventually proved the best restorative. I shall certainly, either this year or the next, take some steps to exhibit some of my things which I think best worth showing, but I may possibly, indeed probably, put it off till next year in order to have ready another large picture for which the studies are already commenced.



It is near post time, so I will now conclude, hoping that the accounts of your health may be better and better. I have said nothing of poor Paris, so well known to you, and doubtless occupying your thoughts a good deal. What will be the end?

Will you remember me most kindly to all friends to whom I am known in your neighbourhood, especially to Mr William Losh, who surely must mean to look up his friends in London some day, and should bring you with him. I was very sorry to hear from Miss Boyd that he had had a tumble on the ice, with unpleasant consequences which I hope are now disappearing

I shall be sending you the *Westminster Review* in a day or two, and meanwhile and ever am most sincerely yours,

D G ROSSETTI

*16 Jan 1871*

*16 Cheyne Walk*

DEAR MISS LOSH

I send you today by Book Post the *Westminster Review*, and enclosed in it a notice of my Poems from the *New Monthly Magazine* <sup>44</sup> I fancy I must have originally sent you some of the best Did you see Swinburne's essay on the book in the *Fortnightly* or the one which Morris wrote in the *Academy*? Other good ones were in the *Athenaeum*, *Pall Mall*, *Fraser's Magazine*, etc. and if you did not see these, I dare say my mother has kept some and I could lay hands on them to lend you. Swinburne's and Morris's I must have myself somewhere, if you have not yet seen them I hope you are getting on better in this somewhat mitigated cold, and am ever

Yours very sincerely

D. G ROSSETTI

P. S.

You will see that the *Westminster* notice is full of the most monstrous misprints.

<sup>44</sup> By Dr T Gordon Hake

In the next letter the pamphlet was probably a combination of the *Tinsley's* article already referred to<sup>45</sup> (evidently written before the *Poems* appeared) and a review of the book. Such an essay was published in 1871 in Harry Buxton Forman's book, *Our Living Poets*, which contained a prefatory note, dated May 1871, in which Mr. Forman stated that a large proportion of the volume had appeared in *Tinsley's* and other magazines "During the last four years I have had in mind the design of making the works of our living poets the subject of a comprehensive and connected study, . . . putting forth from time to time such sections of my projected essay as could be readily adapted to the needs of current review and criticism. . . ."

16 Cheyne Walk  
28 Feb 1871

DEAR MISS LOSH

I was extremely glad to hear the other day from Miss Boyd an improved account of your health. The weather seems bettering somewhat at last, and I hope this will not fail to help you still further. I now forward you the *Fortnightly* containing Swinburne's notice of me, — also Morris's cut out of the *Academy*, and thirdly, a little pamphlet which is a reprint sent me by the author (Mr. Forman, known to Scott,) of a very enthusiastic review which has just appeared in *Tinsley's Magazine*. The Swinburne and Morris articles I certainly thought I had sent you at the time, and cannot help still thinking that I did so (or at least Swinburne's if not the other) but in such case it must have miscarried. I may also enclose you a notice written by myself in a late number of the *Academy* on the poems of Dr. Hake,<sup>46</sup> who on his side is the author of that notice of me which you liked in the *New Monthly* (and to keep which you are most welcome). He is a gentleman with whom many years ago I had some slight literary

<sup>45</sup> Page 88

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Gordon Hake, who later became very intimate with Rossetti

correspondence, owing to my admiration for some anonymous writings of his,<sup>47</sup> but whom I never knew till about a year ago when he called on me. He is a man a good deal older than myself,<sup>48</sup> but whom I like greatly. I need not ask you to return Mr Forman's little pamphlet, as he has sent me several copies. No hurry about the others either, but I will ask you to let me have them again ultimately, as they are borrowed.

I do trust some time this year to get northwards again and see you at Ravenside en route for Penkill. But all remains as usual to be determined by fate and work. I have been driven nearly crazy lately by delays in work from unavoidable causes, but my health is no obstacle at present, I am happy to say.

Do not pray answer this, as I know you ought not to be using your eyes more than can be helped.

Ever yours sincerely

D. G. ROSSETTI

P S The No of the Academy with my notice of Hake contains also an article by Scotus and a beautiful poem by Topsy — this you need not return.

By the end of May, Rossetti and the Morris family had moved to Kelmscott Manor. "The Fleshly School of Poetry" had appeared in the October number of the *Contemporary Review*, and on October 17 Rossetti had written William that he knew Buchanan to be the author.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Vates, or the Philosophy of Madness*, with etchings by Landseer, read by D G R in 1844. Rossetti wrote to Hake in 1860 (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 281).

<sup>48</sup> At this time Hake was sixty-two, and Rossetti forty-three. For an account of their meeting and friendship, see *The Life and Letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton*, pp 63 ff.

<sup>49</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 249.

28 Oct. 1871

MY DEAR MISS LOSH

It was a pleasure to see your handwriting again, and a very great one to hear such favourable news as I have lately had of your health on more than one occasion. The above <sup>50</sup> are the best attempts I have struck out for the monogram (a joint one, as I judge) but the letters are not favourable ones for combination — If two single ones, and not a joint one, are wanted, I will draw them in that form with the greatest pleasure. Perhaps you may have heard from Miss Boyd something of my movements this year. I have been 3 whole months at a beautiful old-fashioned house in Oxfordshire — near the borders of Gloucestershire — at a little hamlet called Kelmscott, the nearest town to which is Lechlade, — that being however but a “one-eyed” town as the Yankees say, and the nearest station being Farringdon, 6 or 7 miles off. So Kelmscott is quite as quiet a place as Penkill, and I only wish I could say it was equally interesting. The country is deadly flat, though of course the river walks — for the house is built almost on the bank of the Thames — *are* extremely pretty, if somewhat monotonous. However the house itself and its belongings are simply an “Earthly Paradise,” appropriate you will say to our old friend Top, who was and is my joint tenant in it. The house is absolutely Elizabethan in style and in a perfectly genuine state, though it may probably be really built somewhat later, as styles would change but slowly at Kelmscott, which is about the doziest clump of grey old beehives to look at that you could find anywhere. Its inhabitants number 117. Our house has never been inhabited till now by any but the family that built it and their descendents, and the old lady who let it to us merely did so because her husband had just died there and the place had painful associations. My studio there is hung with old

<sup>50</sup> The top of the letter is cut off, it probably contained the drawings

tapestry which has I suppose been there since the house was built, but otherwise we did the furnishing — a matter however of no great difficulty to me, as this house was full of superfluities which turned out very useful there

I both painted and wrote while in the country, and no doubt benefited a good deal. My large picture<sup>51</sup> had time to dry thoroughly in readiness for last work, and also to have its huge frame made, while I was away, and moreover during that time a thorough change has been made in the windows of my studio here by an architect a friend of mine,<sup>52</sup> so that now on my return I find myself for the first time in possession of a splendid painting light. The big picture is to all intents and purposes finished, though I shall do some work to it yet. If you come to London, you can see it. So there now! And I can lodge you besides, to say nothing of your other town residence at Bellevue.

It is too late to do anything with the picture in the way of exhibition this year, but I shall show it next Spring in some way or other

Thanks for your kind enquiries about my eyes. For more than a year and a half now, I have been quite free from any inconvenience with them, and trust they may hold out yet. I do not have any longer to think of limiting my hours of work, and indeed only fail in getting enough daylight for my purposes. My sister Christina has, I am most grieved to say, suffered lately a very long spell of painful illness, worse than ever before, and has come out of it completely altered and looking suddenly 10 years older. However there seems some reason to hope that the worst of it has really been conquered for the present, and she is on the whole much in her usual state as to health and spirits now, having at any rate a great deal of courage for endurance. She is on the

<sup>51</sup> "Dante's Dream" By November 7 he speaks of it as finished

<sup>52</sup> Philip Webb

point of bringing out her nursery rhymes at last (entitled *Sing Song*) though, as you probably know, a change of publisher<sup>53</sup> has involved a change of scheme as to the illustrations and those which Miss Boyd was doing are thus precluded from forming part of the book. This is provoking and owing in great measure to rather undecided conduct on the part of the publisher who was originally to have brought out the book. You may possibly have heard that my elder sister also has just brought out a book, called *A Shadow of Dante*. It is a compendious and most thoroughly executed view of himself and the scheme of his work, and will be quite invaluable to English readers if there be a sufficient class of them who take an interest in really knowing something of Dante. It has only just been issued, so one can judge nothing of success as yet. I have not yet read it myself, but as soon as I have done so will forward my copy for your perusal if you would like to read it. My mother keeps her health splendidly, and at a family party here the other day she really seemed to me to look essentially the youngest and brightest of the company. Long may she remain so!

Scotus pursues, as you probably know, his path as of old — divided between painting, writing, and the multifarious occupations of the collector, which no doubt still occasionally lead him in the direction of Puttick and Simpson's, though not I trust, into the broad path which leadeth to destruction<sup>54</sup>. He is looking very well on his return from Penkill this year, and we only need Miss Boyd to recommence our three-handed whist. Why do you not come at the same time and complete the party as of old?

My tent has not been up in the garden this year, as the short period of summer during which it could have been available was

<sup>53</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 498. Macmillan's terms were too low, Gabriel procured better ones from Ellis, but the book was issued in 1872 by George Routledge.

<sup>54</sup> See the chapter on William Bell Scott.

passed by me at Kelmscott By the bye, there is one serious drawback to the charms of that residence, viz, that it gets flooded after rains to such an excess that before I left it I went out in a boat on the fields I used to walk over. Thus for much of the winter I suppose the place must be well-nigh inaccessible. Moreover the roads at the same time got thoroughly swamped, and such walks as I could take had to be got out of stubble-fields and queer byways which were not very delectable — But if you saw the house you would not wonder that it proved irresistible to us

Pray let me know at once if 2 single monograms, and not a double one, be the thing needed, and believe me, with kindest remembrances,

Ever yours most sincerely

D G. ROSSETTI

This optimistic letter ends the correspondence, so far as I know. Miss Losh died in March 1872, and the improvement in Rossetti's health lasted only a short time. The insomnia from which he had suffered earlier returned with increased severity. He began in 1871 to take chloral, this alone had a depressing effect on him, but in order to do away with the unpleasant taste of the drug, he formed the habit of following the chloral with a glass of whiskey. Until this time he had been most abstemious in regard to any form of liquor, and the whiskey probably contributed as much as the chloral to his rapidly increasing melancholia. William Rossetti wrote that in June 1872 his brother was "an actual monomaniac,"<sup>55</sup> and later in the month he had a further collapse from which he never completely regained soundness of mind or body. By September he was able to resume an outwardly normal life, but the next ten years were far from happy, and thus at forty-four the best of his life was already behind him.

<sup>55</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 309

## VII

### CHARLES AUGUSTUS HOWELL AND THE EXHUMATION

ONE of the most famous incidents in English literary history is that of Rossetti's consignment of the manuscript of his unpublished poems to the coffin of his wife, who had died in circumstances indicating suicide, and his exhumation of her body seven years later for the purpose of recovering the poems. The documents transcribed here reveal the actual directions given by Rossetti to his friend Charles Augustus Howell,<sup>\*</sup> who was the instigator, as well as the executor, of the plan. Howell's relations with Rossetti and other distinguished men of the day are worth relating at some length, as no biography of this extraordinary personality has appeared.

Exactly who he was, or where he came from, even his friends do not seem to have known. He was rumored to have been mysteriously associated with high, but nameless, people in Portugal and to have been sent by them on a secret mission to England, he was said to have been involved in the Orsini conspiracy and obliged to fly for his life across the Channel. The broad red ribbon worn across his shirt front was rumored to be a Portuguese decoration hereditary in the family, although William Morris, when questioned as to its significance, replied shortly that he supposed Howell had stolen it from somebody. The indisputable fact is that he was a man of extraordinary personal charm, with an unrivaled talent for intimacy: he knew everybody, he introduced everybody, and he entangled everybody with everybody else. In his pursuit of old china and furniture he became a familiar figure to all the art dealers, and was loved and hated by all the pawnbrokers in London, he figured in the law courts, where he was complimented by the judge and was awarded heavy damages

<sup>\*</sup> I am indebted to the two volumes of *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London, 1908), by Elizabeth R. and Joseph Pennell, for much information about Howell.



by the jury for nothing in particular, as a vestryman, he gave teas for hundreds of school children, and at Selsea Bill three cottages were turned into a house for him, and he swaggered in the village as a great personage, finding an occupation in stripping copper from an old wreck that had lain there for years but had never been touched before.

The truth of his origin seems to be that he was the son of an English drawing master, living in Lisbon and married to a Portuguese. In 1857 he was convicted in Oporto of cardsharpping and sent to an uncle in Darlington, England. He was then seventeen years old, but he was well grown and had already had considerably more experience with the world than any of the men surrounding Rossetti, whom he first met at this time. After an absence in Portugal from 1858 to 1864 he was welcomed back eagerly and at once became a prime favorite with the circle. He thus became known to John Ruskin, who engaged him as his secretary about 1865 and who cherished him extremely for some time and placed implicit confidence in him, even to the extent, according to Howell, of sending him to Ireland in 1868 to try to get over the difficulties of Ruskin's love affair. Howell disguised himself as a tramp to obtain an interview, but "without effecting the desired change of sentiment."<sup>2</sup> The same year Ruskin gave him two hundred pounds to set himself up in a new house at Northend, Fulham, where Ruskin wished him to live in order to be near Burne-Jones and keep him up in health and spirits. Howell at this time was buying for Ruskin almost everything that Burne-Jones painted.<sup>3</sup> The rupture between them (about 1870) was caused largely by Burne-Jones, who, after liking Howell enormously, conceived himself injured by him and made a real issue of the matter amongst his friends. Rossetti also found himself in a position of embarrassment between Burne-Jones, who wanted him to cut Howell, and Howell himself, to whom he felt a deep sense of obligation for the services rendered him in connection with the exhumation. At all events, during the next two years Rossetti and Howell seldom met, but in 1872, when Rossetti was

<sup>2</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

living at Kelmscott, he decided to have an agent in London to transact the sale of uncommissioned work, and he settled on Howell as the man for his purposes. When Howell had ceased to be Ruskin's secretary, he had become a dealer and speculator in works of art of many kinds. *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue* says succinctly that he "earned his living by selling as genuine spurious 'Old Masters'." He acquiesced in Rossetti's proposal with alacrity.

As a salesman, with his delightful manner and his exhaustless gift of amusing talk, he was irresistible, and Rossetti, long after he and Howell had parted company, continued to assert that he had materially benefited from Howell's exertions, had at no other time experienced equal facility in disposing of his works, and had never been conscious of the least direct unfairness towards himself in their dealings. As Rossetti was always keenly alive to his own interests in a financial way, and in his later years extremely suspicious of nearly everyone, this testimony to the fair dealing of Howell — much decried in life and after death — should in justice be remembered.

In 1866 Howell had become Swinburne's man of business, and soon was also the partner of his amusements, the confidant of his literary projects, and his main channel of communication with the world. As an entertainer, a guide, an intermediary, he had no rivals, and, as such, he was indispensable to Swinburne. Gosse says that for seven or eight years Howell was to Swinburne all that Atticus was to Cicero.<sup>4</sup> In 1873 Swinburne became incensed with Howell, and Edmund Gosse and Ford Madox Brown, hearing of his misdeeds, recommended Swinburne to place his business affairs in the hands of Theodore Watts. It is not clear that Swinburne suffered from a material point of view, as Burne-Jones and Ruskin are said to have done, from the vagaries of Howell, but as late as 1898 Swinburne was writing in his most denunciatory vein to William Rossetti of the "pole-cat Howell; the vilest wretch I ever came across."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London, 1917), p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, VIII, 185.

Quarrels and distrust, however, could never make Whistler deny Howell's fascination. His talk was one of his recommendations to both Whistler and Rossetti, and the latter always rejoiced in his "Niagara of lies," which he immortalized in the following limerick

There's a Portuguese person named Howell  
Who lays on his lies with a trowel  
Should he give over lying,  
'Twill be when he's done dying,  
For living is lying with Howell <sup>6</sup>

Their point of view was not shared by John Ruskin's mother, who used to say, when Howell had been regaling the Ruskins after dinner with some of his wonderful tales, "How *can* you two men sit there and listen to such a pack of lies?"

Howell had just the qualities to enchant Whistler, who described him as "the wonderful man, the genius, the Gil-Blas-Robinson-Crusoe hero out of his proper time, the creature of top-boots and plumes, splendidly flamboyant." For many years he was as frequent a visitor at Lindsey Road as at Tudor House, and by 1877 he had made himself as useful to Whistler as he had to Rossetti, and their friendship became close intimacy. One day Whistler saw Howell passing the house with Miss Rosa Corder (Howell's mistress and the mother of his natural daughter, Rosalind) and called to them to come in. Howell said "Why, you have etched many plates, haven't you? You must get them out, you must print them, you must let me see to them — there's gold waiting. And you have a press!" The press was in a room upstairs, and rusty from disuse, but Howell would listen to no objection; he said he would fix up the press, he would pull it, and the next morning there they all were, Rosa Corder, Howell, and Whistler, with Howell pulling at the wheel, grinding more ink, dashing off to see Mr. Graves, the print-seller, and orders flying about, and checks — it was all amazing! Howell profited, of course. One evening they had left a pile of eleven prints just

<sup>6</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 495

pulled, and the next morning only five were there "It's very strange," said Howell "We must have a search. No one could have taken them but me, and that, you know, is impossible!"<sup>7</sup>

In 1882 there were complications in which Padden, a diamond merchant, figured, and further complications over the Chinese cabinet which Mr Morse had bought from Whistler when he moved into No 2 Lindsey Road For a long time Mr. Morse was left with only the lower part, while Howell had the top. The affair is set forth in the "Padden Papers," the pamphlet which marked the end of the friendship between Howell and Whistler.

In an undated letter to Watts-Dunton, Rossetti writes that Howell's failings have "gradually turned all friends into foes for him, and he is quite at bay . . . If no consideration is shewn him, my own impression is that his position is a very serious one . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Howell's death was as strange and dramatic as his life He was found one morning lying unconscious in the gutter outside a public house in Chelsea with his throat cut and a ten-shilling piece wedged between his clenched teeth. He died a few days later, on April 24, 1890, at the Home Hospital in Fitzroy Square, and was certified to have died of pneumonic phthisis, thus avoiding a scandal that an inquest might have revealed.

He had several times excited curiosity by pseudo-posthumous sales of his possessions, to which his bewildered friends had flocked in the hope that their long-lost treasures might come to light W Graham Robertson<sup>9</sup> recalls that Ellen Terry sent him a hurried scrawl one day: "Howell is *really* dead *this* time — Do go to Christy's and see what turns up" Robertson did so, and as he recounted the items to Whistler the latter easily identified them: "That was Rossetti's — that's mine — that's Swinburne's," and so on, ending without the least ill will: "You couldn't keep anything from him, and you did exactly as he told you. He was really wonderful."

This, then, was the man to whom Rossetti entrusted the task of recovering the gray, calf-bound volume which had lain in the

<sup>7</sup> Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, I, 214

<sup>8</sup> *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, VI, 69

<sup>9</sup> *Time Was*, p 188

coffin of Elizabeth Eleanor Rossetti since her death at the age of twenty-nine on February 10, 1862. The feelings which had induced him to sacrifice his chances of poetic fame were undoubtedly compounded of love and remorse, he had many things for which to reproach himself, and this gesture was in some sort an atonement

By 1869, however, time had assuaged his feelings, his friends had for months urged him to recover the manuscripts, and, in addition, he was deeply in love. The first mention of the matter appears in a letter to Howell on other affairs.

[*Summer 1869*]  
*Monday 16 Cheyne Walk,*  
*Chelsea*

DEAR OLD BOY

I send [*illegible*] list — Wm. takes 3 shares. When shd he send the tin? Let him know.

Janey <sup>10</sup> gives me very bad news of Ned,<sup>11</sup> who it seems is likely to return to London in a few days. I am most anxious about him, and have asked for the next news at once, as if it is bad, I shall go and see him without delay. I certainly think they ought not to push on.

Your letter about the poems was very kind, but it's a ghastly business.

You know I expect you and Mrs. Coronio <sup>12</sup> with the little gypsy on Thursday at 1 o'clock.

Janey <sup>13</sup> has stopped her sittings by order during foreign service — just as I supposed —

Do let me know any news of Ned and his affairs. Write or better — come —

Your

GABRIEL

<sup>10</sup> Mrs William Morris

<sup>11</sup> Edward Burne-Jones

<sup>12</sup> Rossetti did a picture for Mrs Coronio, sister of the Ionides brothers, entitled "Calliope Coronio," in 1869

<sup>13</sup> Jane and William Morris went to Ems in July 1869 for Mrs Morris's health

P. S You should make Swinburne take some shares. He is an old friend of Inchbold's,<sup>14</sup> and would be only too glad.

How is poor Mary Z?<sup>15</sup>

He hesitated for some time longer but finally made up his mind to allow Howell to take the necessary action.

*Monday 16 August 1869*

MY DEAR HOWELL

I feel disposed, if practicable, by your friendly aid, to go in for the recovery of my poems if possible, as you proposed some time ago. Only I should have to beg *absolute* secrecy to *everyone*, as the matter ought really not to be talked about. If you think this feasible, will you let me know what letter from myself is necessary I am just at this moment leaving for Scotland, so perhaps you will think it best to defer the matter till my return, especially as you are probably on the move yourself. If however you think it can be done now, so much the better. It is a matter on which — having been lately taking up my old M.S.S. — I begin to feel some real anxiety

Will you write me a line addressed Penkill Castle Girvan Ayrshire

I am leaving London tomorrow (Tuesday) at 10 A.M. and shall be on the road 2 or 3 days, (as I have to pay a half-way visit<sup>16</sup>)

<sup>14</sup> Inchbold, a painter, is spoken of in W. M. Rossetti's diary in January 1869 (*Rossetti Papers*, p. 380) as having had to give up his own lodging because of pecuniary difficulties and finally going to live with Howell. This sort of thing seems not to have been unusual with Inchbold, as it occasioned the following limerick from D. G. Rossetti (*ibid.*, p. 495)

There is a mad Artist named Inchbold  
With whom you must be at a pinch bold.  
Or else you may score  
The brass plate on your door  
With the name of J. W. Inchbold

<sup>15</sup> Possibly the lady known as the wife of Frederick Sandys. See *ante*, p. 57

<sup>16</sup> At Miss Losh's. See *ante*, p. 87

but will answer as soon as I get your note. I am sorry I could not find time to apply to Kitty <sup>17</sup> for another sitting before leaving, but will not fail to do so almost immediately on my return.

The last news I have of Janey a few days ago, is, I think I may safely say now, encouraging. I suppose they are likely to be back in about three weeks I trust to Heaven she may be better by then in a decided degree The cure certainly seems promising at present

With love to Kitty

I am your affectionate

D. GABRIEL R.

P.S. If I recover the book I will give you the swellest drawing conceivable, or if you like paint the portrait of Kitty.

The next three letters were written from Penkill Castle, the home of Miss Alice Boyd, with whom Rossetti and William Bell Scott were staying. Scott was preparing his *Albert Durer: His Life and Works*, with which he was experiencing great difficulty, as Durer's own letters and journal were spelt phonetically and rendered archaic after three centuries and a half. Rossetti assisted him with this work and continued his own poetical labors with growing enthusiasm He elaborated "Eden Bower" and "Troy Town," began "The Stream's Secret," and corrected proofs of many other poems which appeared in the 1870 *Poems*.

*Penkill Castle Girvan Ayrshire*

*Thursday 26 August*

DEAR HOWELL

I am extremely grieved to hear from Dunn <sup>18</sup> of Kate's sudden and serious illness which however he tells me is greatly abated. Will you write me word and let me know your anxiety is relieved on the subject.

<sup>17</sup> Howell's wife

<sup>18</sup> Henry Treffry Dunn, Rossetti's assistant at Cheyne Walk

Also will you write me in answer to what I wrote before leaving town? The matter occupies my mind. I shall be here for at least a fortnight longer. The news from Ems is pretty well, but I could wish it much better. If this were but well, nothing could be very ill.

I have written to congratulate all parties on Luke's<sup>19</sup> approaching marriage.

There is no news here, except that a walk is a warm bath, and that Albert Durer can be not only a pleasure but a nuisance also after a lapse of 3 centuries.

Ever your affec:

GABRIEL

*Penkill Castle Girvan Ayrshire*

*3 Sept 1869*

MY DEAR HOWELL

Thanks for your letter. I write with this to Kitty to tell her how very glad I am she is quite well again after so much suffering and anxiety. She must no doubt take great care of herself for the present.

In connection with the other matter, it has suddenly flashed upon me that I believe a man I know pretty well is now Home Secretary. Is it not Henry A. Bruce?<sup>20</sup> Will you look in some list and see. I cannot find any here. If this is so, I had better perhaps write him direct as enclosed, and tell him that, (his sanction obtained,) an intimate friend of mine has undertaken to manage matters for me. So, as I feel almost sure he is the man, I enclose a letter. If you think any other plan of action better, let me know at once please, — or if you do not think the letter the thing. If you do think this the best course on reflection, perhaps

<sup>19</sup> Luke Ionides and his family were prominent members of the Greek art colony in London.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce, afterwards Lord Aberdare, had been known to Rossetti since the first project of the Llandaff triptych.



you had better post the letter. I do not think necessary to date it from here, but his answer will be sent me from London, if coming before my return — By the bye, I had better leave you to put his address, which will be easily found. He used to live in Chesham Place, but I don't know if he still does With a thousand thanks

Affectionately yours,  
DGR

P S. The grave is at Highgate Cemetery the exact spot can be found at once by enquiry at the lodge.

P S. I have been taking great trouble with my proofs and roused myself to an interest in the subject

As for the Janey drawing, take it by all means, only I think I will rely on your exercising self denial and letting me have it again at any time that I wanted it for myself, by my giving you something instead. It ought to be photo'd before leaving my studio, but I think on looking last at it I considered the mouth needed a slight alteration, so this shd be made first. Perhaps therefore you had better let it stand over Have you found the Janey in a chair? Do Do Do find it

Howell, who was always delighted with any occasion for contact with the prominent, whether murderer or minister, seized this letter as an opportunity to write direct to the Home Secretary, who sent him the following reply, addressing him as "Signor" in deference to his Portuguese ancestry.

[Seal of Secretary of State, Home Department]

*Culloquhey Crieff*  
*Sept. 9, 1869*

MY DEAR SIGNOR

I did not answer your letter directly as I wished for inform<sup>n</sup> as to the extent of my powers in this particular case. It seems

clear that I have power to authorise the opening of the grave — But I do not think that I ought to exercise this power without the knowledge and consent of the owner of the grave — If this can be got, I will, on due application which must be formally made, give with pleasure the required authority

I am here staying with the Lord Advocate — but hope to be at home on Tuesday

I hope Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin are tolerably well — Pray remember me very kindly to them.

Believe me as ever

Yours very sincerely

H A BRUCE

A few days later Bruce wrote to Rossetti himself.

[Seal of Secretary of State, Home Department]

*Culloquhey Crieff*

*Sept. 13, 1869*

*Private*

MY DEAR ROSSETTI

You may depend upon my doing my utmost to consult your wishes — I felt some difficulty in acting without the authority of your Mother, to whom the grave belongs, but I think that the circumstances you mention justify a departure from the strict rule —

I am staying with the Lord Advocate — but return home tomorrow

Sincerely yours

H A BRUCE

This letter and a note of introduction Rossetti enclosed when he next wrote to Howell on September 16.

*Penkill Sept 16, 1869*

MY DEAR HOWELL

I send you Bruce's answer just received, and also a note of introduction to him, in case you think it well to see him, which I should think might facilitate his movements. I write to him with this to say I am sending you such a note. He is an old friend and will I know receive you cordially. I suppose you sent my letter to him to the Home Secretary's office, and would call on him there. I am returning to town now almost immediately and will write you word on getting there.

Love to Kitty whose kind letter was very welcome and whose recovery is good news of the best. Will you return her the note she sent me. From that quarter also news seems good, thank God!

Very affectionately yours,

GABRIEL

P.S. If you write, write to Chelsea.

P.P.S. I should mention a slight possible complication. An aunt<sup>21</sup> of mine died two or three years ago and is, I find, buried in Highgate Cemetery, but whether in the same family grave or not I do not know, — however I fancy not. You should enquire whether the burial in question (Feb. 1862) is the last in that grave. I have not yet told William of the steps we are taking.

The book in question is bound in rough grey calf and has I am almost sure red edges to the leaves. This will distinguish it from the Bible also there as I told you.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Polidori had died in February 1867

<sup>22</sup> Who put this in? The coffin seems to have been full of unrelated objects — Violet Hunt says a dead dove was included (*The Wife of Rossetti*, London, 1932, p. 318)

[Enclosure]

16 Cheyne Walk Chelsea  
16th. Sept. 1869

MY DEAR BRUCE

I give this note of introduction to my friend Mr. C. A. Howell  
Whatever you may say to him will be as if said to me

sincerely yours

D G ROSSETTI

*Right Honble.**H A. Bruce M. P.*

An entry in the diary of William Rossetti on September 21, 1869, states: "Gabriel returned to Chelsea yesterday [from Penkill], and I saw him this evening . . . He has done a good deal of poetry . . . He seems more anxious just now to achieve something permanent in poetry than in painting — in which he considers that at any rate two living Englishmen, Millais and Jones, show a higher innate *executive* power than himself."<sup>23</sup>

The following document renders testimony to the powerful urge of this ambition.

28th Sept. 1869

In accordance with the order granted by the Right Honorable Henry Austin Bruce, Her Majesty's Secretary for the Home Department, for the exhumation of the body of my late wife, Elizabeth Eleanor Rossetti, buried at Highgate Cemetery I hereby authorize my friend, Charles Augustus Howell, of Northend Grove, Northend, Fulham, to act in all matters as he may think fit, for the purpose of opening the coffin and taking charge of the M.S. volume deposited therein.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

*16 Cheyne Walk Chelsea*

<sup>23</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p 407

On October 13 Rossetti wrote to his brother, telling him that he had recovered the manuscripts and that the principal difficulty had been the "impossibility of mentioning so painful a matter to our mother, the owner of the grave, and so obtaining her authority. But on the other hand this special coffin was of course my sole property, and Bruce, after considering the matter, came to the conclusion that this could under the circumstances be overruled. Had he not thought so, I should have been bound to invent some pretext for changing my wife's place of interment and so got over mother's authority for opening the grave. But this fortunately did not become necessary, and the thing is done. All in the coffin was found quite perfect, but the book, though not in any way destroyed, is soaked through and through, and had to be still further saturated with disinfectants. It is now in the hands of the medical man <sup>24</sup> who was associated with Howell in the disinterment, and who is carefully drying it leaf by leaf . . . It was a service I could not ask you to perform for me, nor do I know anyone except Howell who could well have been entrusted with such a trying task. It was necessary, as we found, that a lawyer should be employed in the matter, to speak to the real nature of the MSS, as difficulties were raised to the last by the Cemetery Authorities as to there possibly being papers the removal of which involved a fraud. This service Tebbs <sup>25</sup> rendered me . . . I have begged Howell to hold his tongue for the future, but if he does not I cannot help it . . . To others I shall say at present that I have made the rough copies more available than I hoped; but I suppose the truth must ooze out in time. It is very desirable, as you will think with me, that our family should not know of it." <sup>26</sup>

No one seems to know how the affair was made public property, since it was intended to keep it even from members of the family, but it is hardly unfair to remark that Charles Howell was not the most reliable person to be given charge of the actual operations,

<sup>24</sup> Dr Llewellyn Williams of Kennington took charge of the disinfecting of the papers

<sup>25</sup> Henry Virtue Tebbs, brother-in-law of John Seddon, was at this time a proctor at Doctors' Commons

<sup>26</sup> *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, VIII, 177-178

useful as the service was to Rossetti, if secrecy was to be the *sine qua non*. These letters and documents, along with some others I have not quoted, were pasted into a large scrapbook and carefully preserved by Howell, whose engaging habit it was to do this with any writing of potential value that he could lay hands on, and, subsequently, at his need, pawn the volumes. These papers probably constitute his final breach of confidence in the matter of the exhumation.

Some months later Rossetti wrote him, evidently in response to Howell's usual complaints of ill-treatment.

*Wednesday [c. April, 1870]*

DEAR HOWELL

I am very sorry not to have seen you to-day, especially after what Dunn told me of your conversation — I should like to see you particularly, in case any good result might ensue by our talking together of the matters on which you wish to speak to me. At present however I am leaving town for at least a week longer —

I am extremely sorry if you find yourself in any troublesome position and should be much relieved if I could help in suggesting any course of action to meet it. To say nothing of our long-standing friendly relations, you rendered me a very essential service some months back, and one which you may be sure I have not forgotten.

Your affec

D G ROSSETTI

If you wish to write me in the country my address is Scalands,<sup>27</sup> Robertsbridge Hawkhurst. You can come and see me there possibly if you like, but I am not quite sure of this yet.

In December 1875 Howell was trying on Rossetti's behalf to negotiate with Baron Grant for a long lease, with the option of

<sup>27</sup> The home of Mrs Bodichon, the former Miss Barbara Leigh Smith.

purchase, of Aldwick Place at Bognor, where Rossetti was temporarily established. In exchange for his services he asked Rossetti to try to help him with some of the "work due," for he was really in want of it and sadly worried — in fact, he might be quite ruined if in five days he failed to obtain two hundred pounds. He begged Rossetti to consider him from the "point of view of justice and common humanity," and to believe that he never worried without need.<sup>28</sup>

Rossetti forwarded this note and another to Watts-Dunton, who was acting for him in all legal matters, with the following letter:

15 Dec. [1875] Bognor

MY DEAR WATTS

I may as well enclose 2 stupid letters of Howell's that you may see what he says. Of course I need not say that all the charges against myself of neglecting his interests are just moonshine. I suppose — as the picture question is evidently all gammon, and as I shd like the place much if I could get it — that the best plan wd be to try and deal with Grant on mere business terms — but how? And is he so unapproachable as Howell makes out? One thing has struck me. Cowper Temple has been kindly making efforts to find a place that might suit me in *his* (Broadlands Romsey,) neighbourhood, and he would, I am sure, be most willing to serve me in any such matter elsewhere, as reference or any feasible way. Do you think he could be brought in at all? The whole matter wd gain much by a *talk* with you. In haste

Ever yrs

DGR

P S Of course I have great doubts as to his statement that he has been near Grant at all.

<sup>28</sup> Unpublished letter in possession of Mr. T J. Wise. Partially quoted in *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, VI, 164

# Funeral Company.

C. A. Gould Esq. *of New York* *to* *the* *Funeral* *Company* *of* *New* *York* *City* *Nov. 1869*

*To the Proprietors*

*2 Men attending at Staggards Cemetery  
to show & close Coffins in  
Emergency & Burial. carrying Men & 200  
in all Cemetery  
- have Men express for expenditure, 200 &  
Company.*



*Received  
the sum of 1000  
Nov 1869*

*with Mr. C. A. Gould's compliments & receipt of his*

BILL FOR THE EXHUMATION





In February 1876 a man named Levy intended to sue Howell about some affair which included a dress that, for artistic purposes, had passed into Rossetti's hands<sup>29</sup> Rossetti did not wish to appear in court and decided to pay Levy the forty pounds Howell said Levy demanded. The charge of Howell's "muddling" his affairs contained in the following letter was well founded. Howell's system was to go to a person whom they both knew and borrow money from him, offering as security drawings of Rossetti's which Howell represented as already due him Mr Valpy and Mr. Fry were both approached in this manner. Mr Valpy (through Howell) bought "Dante's Dream" for £1,575, after Mr William Graham had relinquished it, and Mr. Fry bought the "Venus Astarte" for £2,100, also through Howell, who got a commission of £210, which Rossetti, as usual, arranged to pay half in work and half in cash

In an undated letter to Watts-Dunton,<sup>30</sup> Rossetti says that he has just received a very curious letter from Fry which seems to insinuate that Howell borrowed large sums of money in Rossetti's name "as loans to me indeed! At least it looms on me in that light, but is desperately obscure"

*Tuesday [January? 1876]*

DEAR DUNN

This devil Levy is a great nuisance I have sent an answer stating what he wants to Watts, asking his advice as to sending it or not to Levy.

Valpy wants his *Chalk Drawing* of Beatrice. If he writes saying when he will send for it, please deliver it

I wish at your leisure you wd put some of those Russia leather cuttings in the wardrobe chests and other drapery receptacles I really think it would be well if you could see Howell who seems to

<sup>29</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 350

<sup>30</sup> *The Ashley Library, A Catalogue*, VI, 69.

be muddling Valpy's affairs with me in several ways. I mean merely that you shd see him and judge of his position

In haste for post

DGR

If Levy looks you up, you had better know nothing about it. Say I was passing through London a few days ago, but you don't know whether I am now at Bognor or elsewhere — This to account for the letter being posted in London if Watts sends it to him. I have put no address of my own at the head of the letter

The second letter is the last communication from Rossetti to Howell in my possession, and is dated February 8, 1876. It is marked "copy," and is in the hand of George Hake except for a few lines added in by Rossetti:

8 Feb. 1876  
(Copy)

*Aldwick Lodge  
near Bognor*

MY DEAR HOWELL

I hear you rather coolly propose that *I* should pay the 40£ (forty pounds) due from you to Mr. Levy! Why?

You know perfectly well that such debt as there is from me to you was contracted on the clear understanding that the draperies etc which it represents should be paid for in *work only*, and you know perfectly that otherwise I should not have dreamed of contracting so large a debt for such a purpose. What are the items, and what is the total? I will begin immediately putting such work as I have at command against it

I lately paid you in cash much to my own inconvenience a sum of 90£ — which was due in *work only* on our clear understanding

(it being the balance of your 210£ commission on Fry's picture,<sup>31</sup> which was payable half in cash and half in work), and now you want to wrest from me, who, as you know well, can ill afford it, another 40£ on the same transmuted plan of payment. Moreover I learn that Levy's real charge for the dress in question was for £15. You charged it to me at 35£ — What then am I to think of your statement in other similar cases that your charge to me has been the same as you paid yourself? Of course there is no earthly need that it should be so, nor any common sense in such an arrangement, but why not state things as they are? I expect nothing, as you know, but fair business relations.

What I will do is this I will send Watts 20£ towards Levy's claim, being an excess of 5£ on Levy's charge for the dress; and you can continue if you like <sup>32</sup> to charge your still further 15£ to my account, as I had agreed to pay 35£ for the dress *in work*. I must tell you that I disburse this sum at great inconvenience to myself being much pressed for money as I always am now, owing to my constantly increasing care with my work. To give more is out of the question <sup>33</sup>

Before I send Watts the 20£ please hand him the pearl pin, as I need and cannot be without it

Ever yours

DGR

The connection with Howell came to an end shortly after this, but Hall Caine, in his memoir of Rossetti, says that in the very last days of Rossetti's life Howell turned up unheralded at the bungalow in Birchington. Rossetti was delighted to see him, and

<sup>31</sup> "Venus Astarte"

<sup>32</sup> "If you like" in Rossetti's autograph

<sup>33</sup> This sentence also added by Rossetti himself

Howell spent the whole day telling stories and making Rossetti laugh continually. Finally Rossetti asked him, "What are you doing now, Charles?"

"Buying horses for the King of Portugal," Howell replied unexpectedly.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Recollections of Rossetti* (1928), p. 239.

## VIII

### DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI'S LETTERS TO HIS MOTHER

ROSSETTI's deep affection for his mother was the most stable thing in his life, and she was the only member of his family with whom he was in any degree demonstrative. These letters are included because they help to fill in the outline of his relationship with her and, in a shadowy way, show something of hers with him, which is not very clearly brought out in any of the Rossetti books

*Friday* [1858]

MY DEAR MAMMA

I dont know if you've heard that Teodorico <sup>2</sup> and I are coming to dinner at Albany Street on Sunday, and are going on in the evening to his friend Barthélémy's. I told him I would tell you, but forgot till now. Would you write him word what time to come to dinner, as perhaps he does not know. I dare say he expects it will be 6 as usual, but I suppose you wish to dine at 2½. I am sorry to give you this hurry and trouble. I shall sleep at home on Saturday, so shall be there and do not need an answer as to hour.

Your affectionate Son

D G ROSSETTI

<sup>2</sup> Teodorico (more correctly Teodoro Pietrocolo Rossetti), a cousin of D G R's, who was living in London between 1851 and 1859, after which he returned to Italy and first practiced as a homoeopathist, later, after his marriage to Miss Isabella Steele, a Scotch lady (who married, after his death, Lionel Cole), he devoted himself to preaching evangelical Christianity in Florence and elsewhere. He published a few things, among them a biography of Gabriele Rossetti, a translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, and one of *Goblin Market* (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 34)

[1859]

DEAR MAMMA

I send you the ticket from Major Gillum,<sup>2</sup> as well as two for the Hogarth<sup>3</sup> Christina asked for one I have been constantly meaning to come in the evenings but have had a hundred things to do. I am very sorry to be such ages without seeing you.

The woman and baby came today. Many thanks

Your affect Son

D G ROSSETTI

*Thursday* [1859]

DEAR MAMMA

Thanks for the boy, who does very well He sat to me yesterday.

Your affectionate Son

DGR

*Wednesday* [1860]<sup>4</sup>

MY DEAR MOTHER

It has struck me — are people coming to you in togs tomorrow evening — i.e. evening dress If not, never mind answering, but if yes, please one word.

Your affect. Son

DGR

<sup>2</sup> Originally sent to Rossetti by Browning because of his interest in water colors and drawing, Gillum was a zealous philanthropist and the founder and director of a boys' home (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 205, 247)

<sup>3</sup> This Hogarth Club was quite a different body from the later one of the same name The first meeting was held in July 1858 The organization expired in 1861 There were two or three exhibitions to which D G R contributed Admission was by card only (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 204)

<sup>4</sup> Dated by Mrs Rossetti

[1860]<sup>5</sup>

MY DEAR MOTHER

I find everything will be in disorder on Saturday next,<sup>6</sup> as we have failed in getting things made up,<sup>7</sup> so we must write and fix a day next week instead, when I hope we shall see you all.

Your affect. Son

D G ROSSETTI

*16 Cheyne Walk Monday night*<sup>8</sup> [1864<sup>2</sup>]

MY DEAR MAMMA

I find one of the two photographs of the boy ought to have been kept here and is wanted at once. Will you kindly put it in an envelope as safely as practicable (but without putting yourself to any trouble) and send it me by post on receipt of this.

Your affect: son

D G ROSSETTI

If needed, you can double it in the middle.

*16 Cheyne Walk Tuesday*<sup>8</sup> [1864<sup>2</sup>]

MY DEAR MAMMA

Your invitation for Thursday seems to settle the question as to whether that day will do for you to come here and meet the Heatons<sup>9</sup> Would Friday do<sup>2</sup> at 7<sup>2</sup> To dinner of course Or if not, could you write asking them to yours for Thursday, as I fear they would not have another day to dispose of — and I have just inadvertently named Thursday to them to meet you here if possible to you, having for the moment forgotten your last night's

<sup>5</sup> Dated in Mrs Rossetti's writing, Lizzie's cipher on paper

<sup>6</sup> After his marriage Rossetti had some alterations made in his living quarters

<sup>7</sup> Two words crossed out

<sup>8</sup> D G R's note paper

<sup>9</sup> Rossetti had gone to the home of M G Aldam Heaton in Yorkshire in 1861 to paint the portrait of Mrs Heaton, one of several heads to bear the title "Regina Cordium" The family was not related to Miss Heaton of Leeds, whose name occurs elsewhere (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 169)



letter. I shall be with you on Thursday evening and should not much regret if the Heatons were to meet you there instead of here, as I have been giving Mrs Pope <sup>10</sup> so much to do in the way of dinners of late So will you, if practicable, write to them *at once*, asking them to tea for Thursday <sup>11</sup> evening

Address

Mrs. J Aldam Heaton  
60 Queen Anne St  
Cavendish Sq.

Your most affec son

GABRIEL

*16 Cheyne Walk*

*Wednesday [1865?]*

DEAR MAMMA

If I can possibly bear it in mind (to which end I have made a note in my mem· book) I shall of course make one at your party on Thursday of next week —

With love to all at home

I am your most affectionate son

GABRIEL

*16 Cheyne Walk*

*Wednesday [1865?]*

MY DEAR MAMMA

I asked you to come here Friday evening, but find I must put it off owing to muddle of work Wednesday next is the day now when I hope you will be able to come, but not if it bores you. Also Christina and Maggie,<sup>12</sup> if the former is back by then. Love to both.

Your affectionate son

GABRIEL

<sup>10</sup> His housekeeper.

<sup>11</sup> "Friday" deleted

<sup>12</sup> His sister Maria

*16 Cheyne Walk Tuesday night [1866?]*

DEAR MAMMA

The dinner hour is 6½ on Thursday but come as early as you can I have been meaning to come up to you, and shall probably do so tomorrow evening (Wednesday). I have now asked Brown, wife and Lucy <sup>13</sup> for Thursday, but have not their answer as yet.

Your GABRIEL

[1866?] <sup>14</sup>

MY DEAR MOTHER

William tells me that Louisa Parke <sup>15</sup> is staying with you, and I trust, judging from what he says, that I may see you all here to dinner on Friday at 7, including Lyster <sup>16</sup> Pray remember me most kindly to Louisa.

I think I shall ask the Roystons, unless I hear that you would prefer my not doing so.

Your affectionate son

GABRIEL

P.S — Of course come as much earlier as you can — the earlier the better

*Monday [1866?] <sup>17</sup>*

GOOD TEAKEY,

I was coming up tomorrow (Tuesday) evening, and shall come I am sorry I cannot manage dinner-time, but at this distance and in these long days it is impossible when one has a model sitting, as I have tomorrow, even were I to ride instead of walking

I suppose that Teodorico and his wife will be there with you.

<sup>13</sup> Brown's daughter, later the wife of William M. Rossetti

<sup>14</sup> Rossetti's device cut off and with it the day of the week

<sup>15</sup> Presumably related to Sir Harry Parke (see C G R's letter, p. 147, n. 30)

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Chaworth Lyster, nephew and adopted son of Thomas Keightley

<sup>17</sup> Date in Mrs. Rossetti's hand

After tomorrow I shall be so preoccupied for some little time that I fear it would be no use to make any dinner appointment.<sup>18</sup>

Pardon great haste.

Your most affec son

GABRIEL

*Monday [1870<sup>2</sup>]*

GOOD ANTIQUE —

Come early tomorrow I have just got a letter from Smetham<sup>19</sup> asking me to let him bring his boys and brother in law to see the house tomorrow about 2. I am rather annoyed but there is hardly time to say no, and I suppose they wont stay long

Your affec:

GABRIEL

*Tuesday [1874<sup>2</sup>]*<sup>20</sup>

DEAR MAMMA

I find more than ever that tomorrow will *not* do for your visit to these diggings, as I have just got a note to say how very important it is for me to be at the shop meeting, and Brown and Marshall will be coming down here for previous discussion of matters.<sup>21</sup> I am really very sorry to defer the real pleasure of seeing you all, including Louisa Parke and Lyster, here, but trust Friday or Saturday will do as well. Pray let one of these days see you here.

Your affectionate son

DGR

<sup>18</sup> "I am anxious" deleted

<sup>19</sup> James Smetham, a painter W M Rossetti says that he was a "deeply devout Methodist painting was his profession and his enjoyment, religion was his life" (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 192) Rossetti knew him first at Cary's Academy, and the acquaintance continued until Smetham's mental and physical breakdown necessitated his withdrawal from all society

<sup>20</sup> Written on black-edged paper

<sup>21</sup> The breaking up of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, & Company

*Thursday [Either 1873-4-5]* <sup>22</sup>

MY DEAREST MOTHER

I have just succeeded in writing dear Maria a letter, but have been quite prevented till now by unusually hard work in beginning a new picture —

I hope to come and see you in another evening or two — perhaps Saturday or Sunday I fear the increased numbers at Euston Square, must, with all your good will, be rather onerous to you I confess I should not rejoice on <sup>23</sup> so very widely increased a family circle at Xmas <sup>24</sup> What do you say to coming *here* for the Xmas dinner, and trying to get poor Maria also if she can possibly come? It would give me great, *very* great pleasure —

Hoping to see you soon

Your loving  
GABRIEL

Will you tell Brown I wd write him this evening but am dead beat with things to do.

*Thursday [1875]*  
3-30

MY DEAREST MOTHER

I really should be very sorry to miss your proposed visit. I find the little boy who is sitting to me will be *quite* sure to be gone by 4-30 so will expect you then or later as you please, if (as I hope) you can come.

Your loving  
GABRIEL

<sup>22</sup> Date in Mrs Rossetti's hand

<sup>23</sup> "In" deleted

<sup>24</sup> The "increased family circle" was consequent upon the engagement of W M Rossetti to Lucy Brown in 1873, or his marriage to her in 1874

Friday [Oct 22/1875]<sup>25</sup>

MY DEAREST MOTHER

Lucy's telegram was a surprise. I have now written <sup>26</sup> to her (being thus urged) to say that I cannot receive them *tomorrow* as <sup>27</sup> she proposes, and that in any case I could not have the nurse here — I suppose I shall hear again by return from her. *Your* visit (much desired by me) there is time to speak of further, as you say you could not come before a week hence, and I will be sure to keep you *au courant*.

Your loving  
GABRIEL

[16 Cheyne Walk  
July 3. 1876]<sup>28</sup>  
Monday<sup>29</sup>

MY DEAREST MOTHER

I need not say how glad I shall be to see yourself and Christina tomorrow (Tuesday). About 4 would be best time

Your most loving son  
GABRIEL

Tuesday [May 1877]<sup>30</sup>

MY DEAREST MOTHER

I only write this line that you may be sure I have not forgotten your proposal to come tomorrow (Weds) at 3 with Christina, unless indeed the weather should be quite prohibitory.

Your loving  
GABRIEL

<sup>25</sup> Date in Mrs Rossetti's hand

<sup>26</sup> "Under this" deleted

<sup>27</sup> "They" deleted

<sup>28</sup> In Mrs Rossetti's hand

<sup>29</sup> "Tuesday" deleted

<sup>30</sup> Date in Mrs Rossetti's hand "April" deleted

*Saturday [July 27 1878]* <sup>31</sup>

MY DEAREST MOTHER

It strikes me — wd you like to make up another party with Aunt Charlotte to come here before she leaves? Our last day was very pleasant

Your loving Son  
GABRIEL

Latter end of next week best if suitable

<sup>31</sup> Date in Mrs Rossetti's hand

## IX

### CHRISTINA ROSSETTI AND *THE PRINCE'S PROGRESS*

THE ROSSETTI household consisted in 1867 of Mrs Rossetti, her two sisters, Margaret and Eliza Polidori; Maria, Christina, and William.<sup>1</sup> In that year Margaret died, but in 1874, when William married Lucy Brown, he and his wife came to live at 56 Euston Square. At this time Maria joined the All Saints' Sisters. The addition of the bride and groom was not wholly successful, and in 1876 Christina, her mother, and her Aunt Eliza moved to 30 Torrington Square, where Aunt Charlotte joined them. It is easy to see that there was little opportunity for privacy in the household, and Christina's methods of composition were naturally influenced by this fact. She wrote anywhere, any time, often standing at the washstand in her little back bedroom. William says that, though he was constantly in the house with her up to his forty-sixth year, he never remembers seeing her in the act of composition.<sup>2</sup> I have some of her manuscripts written in pencil among notes of church duties, in a little memorandum book, one leaf of which is reproduced here. These were later copied in her beautiful clear hand to be shown to Gabriel, and his opinion asked, and taken, often unfortunately. He frequently advised her to alter poems on the ground that they resembled too closely poems by other authors. As her own reading was confined to a narrow range which eventually included little outside the Bible, her work was not likely to be derivative. However, her respect and admiration for Gabriel were boundless, and she did her best to acquiesce in any suggestion from him. She seems to have had a curious disregard for the irregularities of

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel became in 1848 joint tenant with William Holman Hunt of a studio at 7 Cleveland Street, though he continued to sleep at home in 50 Charlotte Street, and Gabriele Rossetti had died in 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie Bell, *Christina Rossetti* (London, 1898), p. 146.

his life, and it is impossible to fathom what sort of picture she made to herself of his strange, disordered existence. She must have met his model and mistress, Fanny Schott, in his studio, and known of the devastating influence she exerted over him all his life, she could not have been ignorant of his infatuation for Mrs William Morris, but Kelmscott, the Morris home, is always "dear Kelmscott" in her letters, and Mrs Morris "dear Mrs Morris." Gabriel himself was under no illusions. He told William Sharp that he had once shocked Maria and Christina, when they had expressed their envy of their martyred sisters of olden days, by telling them that they had had "more than their share of martyrdom in having such a vagabond brother to look after."<sup>3</sup>

Christina certainly understood him far better than William could, and her letters to him are much livelier than those to William. She tried at times to interpret one brother to the other, as when in February 1882<sup>4</sup> she wrote to William of Gabriel "Pray do not ascribe all his doings and non-doings to foundationless fidgetiness, poor dear fellow. Don't you think neither you nor I can quite appreciate all he is undergoing at present, what between wrecked health at least in some measure, nerves which appear to falsify facts, and most anxious money-matters? It is trying to have to do with him at times, but what must it be to be himself. And he in so many ways the head of our family — it doubles the pity."

Gabriel, on his side, recognized very early Christina's genius. In 1848, when Christina and William were at Brighton, they dispatched samples of their poetic efforts to Gabriel, who was in Charlotte Street. He was greatly interested, especially in Christina's compositions, and wrote to William on August 30, 1848 "First, of the sonnets. I grinned tremendously over Christina's *Plague*, which however is forcible, and has something good in it. Her other is first-rate. Pray impress upon her that this, and the one commencing 'Methinks the ills of life,' are as good as anything she has written, and well worthy of revision."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> William Sharp, *Papers Critical and Reminiscent* (New York, 1912), p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 41.



He was indefatigable in bringing her before the public. In 1852<sup>6</sup> he wrote to her, when she was away visiting the Swynfen Jervis family at Darlaston Hall, Staffordshire "I was lately in company with Mrs and Miss Howitt, with whom you are a considerable topic I believe Mamma forwarded to you an intelligent Magazine<sup>7</sup> by Mrs H [owitt] to which you are at liberty to contribute That lady was much delighted with your printed performances, and wishes greatly to know you . . . I forgot to say that Mamma considers 2s 6d sufficient to give the maid — in which, I may add, I do not coincide Mamma however says *you* must judge"

And in 1853 he wrote to her "Maria showed me the other day two poems of yours which are among the best you have written for some time only the title of one — *Something Like Truth* — seems 'very like a whale.' What does it mean? The latter verses of this are most excellent, but some, which I remember vaguely, about 'dreaming of a lifelong ill' (etc., etc, *ad libitum*), smack rather of the old shop. I wish you would try any rendering either of narrative or sentiment from real abundant Nature, which presents much more variety, even in any one of its phases, than all such 'dreamings'""<sup>8</sup>

In this same year he writes in a letter to his mother<sup>9</sup> of trying to interest James Hannay<sup>10</sup> in Christina's prose story, "Nick": "I suppose Christina has not been working much at the Art? Will you tell her that I am quite ashamed of not being able yet to tell her anything positive about *Nick*? I am constantly remembering it when Hannay is not in the way, and always forgetting it when he is I have now resolved to remember it the next time I see him, and, if I am baulked again, to write to him the next time I think of it."

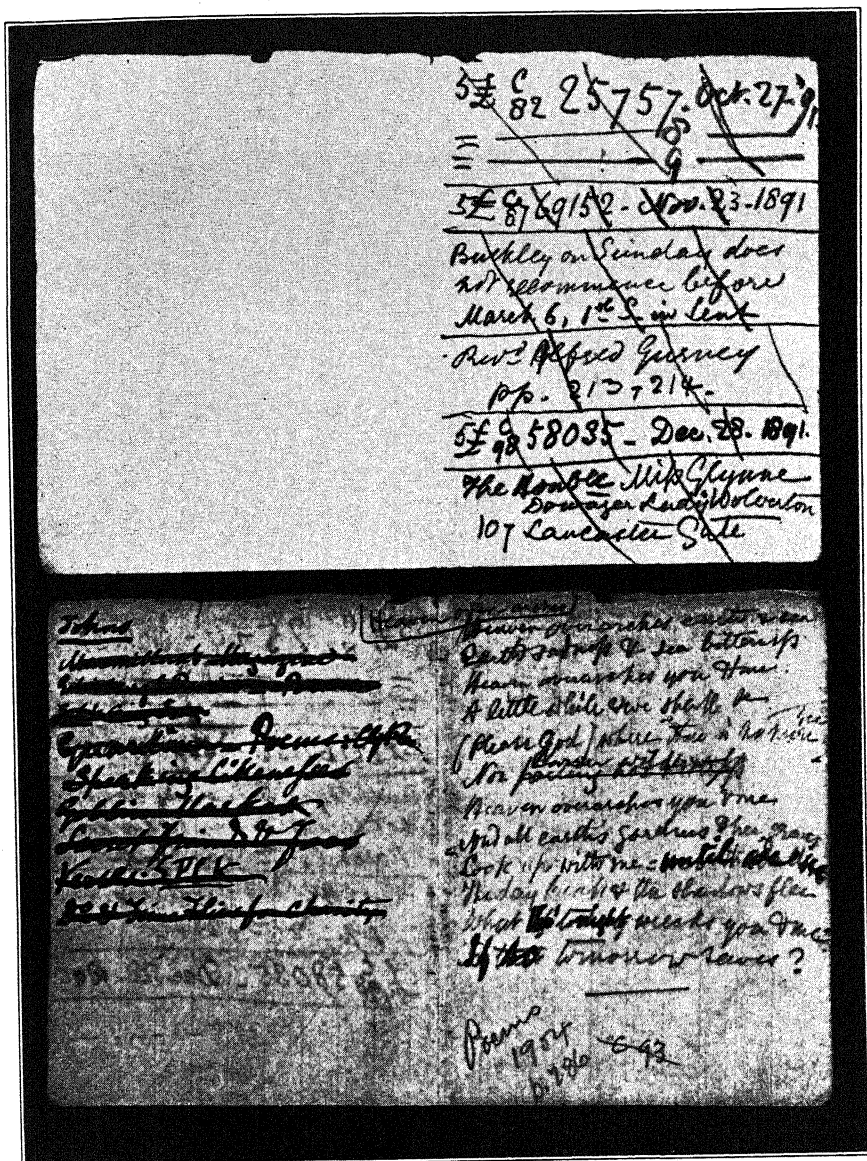
Gabriel was largely instrumental in getting *Goblin Market* published in 1860, but nevertheless his absorption in Lizzie Siddal during their long engagement (he married her in that year) had

<sup>6</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 96

<sup>7</sup> *Aiken's Year*

<sup>8</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 119-120

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 113. <sup>10</sup> Novelist and essayist, later British consul at Barcelona



LEAF FROM CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S MEMORANDUM BOOK  
 (With the manuscript of "Heaven Overarches.")



somewhat estranged him from Christina. Lizzie died in 1862, and Gabriel soon began to urge Christina to prepare another volume. Christina protested in a letter in 1864: "Don't think me a perfect weather cock. But why rush before the public with an immature volume?" Not that the brotherly trouble you have already taken need be lost, as your work will of course avail when (and if) the day of publication comes. Your grateful affectionate bore, C G R."<sup>12</sup> However, Gabriel was always, as a cabman termed him, "a harbitrary cove," and he succeeded in persuading her to turn a brief dirge song into the longish narrative at first called "The Alchemist," which later formed the *pièce de résistance* of *The Prince's Progress*. It is apparent from her letters that the poem was composed with difficulty, and only in response to continual prodding from her brother. She spurred herself on, however, when she found it would give Mrs. Rossetti intense pleasure to have another "performance" by her daughter.<sup>13</sup>

On January 30, 1865, she writes Gabriel that "he's not precisely the Alchemist I prefigured, but thus he came and thus he must stay: you know my system of work."<sup>14</sup> Gabriel then insisted upon the insertion of a tournament into the poem. On this point Christina made a firm stand. "How shall I express my sentiments about the terrible tournament? Not a phrase to be relied on, not a correct knowledge on the subject, not the faintest impulse of inspiration, incites me to the tilt: and looming before me in horrible bugbeardom stand two tournaments in Tennyson's *Idylls*. . . . You see, were you next to propose my writing a classic epic in quantitative hexameters or in the hendecasyllables which might almost trip-up Tennyson, what could I do? Only what I feel inclined to do in the present instance — plead goodwill but inability."<sup>15</sup>

In March she writes him that she has just written a longish thing which no one has yet seen, called for want of a better name, "Under the Rose."<sup>16</sup> The following letter, never before pub-

<sup>12</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

lished, contains a defence of this poem and also shows how largely the whole volume was written or altered to Gabriel's order

*81 High Street  
Hastings 13th [March 1865]*

MY DEAR GABRIEL

You are a kind old thing, thanks many. — now for orderly answers.

1. The *Prince* shall keep your modification of stanza 2, as regards the main point though "I am I" is so strong within me that I again may modify details. Please look at my M.S. and if (as I suspect) I have written (same stanza) "How long shall I wait come *heat* come rime" — oblige me by substituting *frost* for *heat*, as under your charming sketch Never mind the Prince's beard, if you please, though I won't record his waste of time in shaving only please don't mulct me of the Bride's essential veil

2 *Lowest Room* pray eject if you really think such a course advantageous, though I can't agree with you still it won't dismay me that you should do so, I am not stung into obstinacy even by the Isa <sup>16</sup> and Adelaide <sup>17</sup> taunt in which I acknowledge an element of truth

3 Don't you think we might advantageously eject *Royal Princess* also, which is rather a spite of mine?

4. Of course proposals 2, 3, go on the supposition that *Under the Rose* <sup>18</sup> is preferred by you: otherwise such a diminution of

<sup>16</sup> Probably Isa Craig, a poetess who had some slight acquaintance with Christina (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 183)

<sup>17</sup> Probably Adelaide Anne Procter, another poetess friend of C G R

<sup>18</sup> Christina altered the title in the volume of *Collected Poems* issued in 1875, and in all subsequent editions, to "The Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children" for fear, she said, of being thought to treat a serious subject lightly Gabriel disapproved of the change, but as he wished to change "Husband and Wife" to "Grave Clothes and Baby Clothes," or "Grave Clothes and Cradle Clothes," Christina may have felt a natural distrust of his taste in titles (See *Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p 486, and *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 184)

bulk is abhorrent *U the R* herewith (book-post) I meekly return to you, pruned and re-written to order As regards the unpleasant-sided subject I freely admit it: and if you think the performance coarse or what-not, pray eject it, retaining *Lowest Room* and *Royal Princess*, though I thought *U the R* might read its own lesson, but very likely I misjudge But do you know, even if we throw *U the R* overboard, and whilst I endorse your opinion of the unavoidable and indeed much-to-be-desired unreality of women's work on many social matters, I yet incline to include within female range such an attempt as this: where the certainly possible circumstances are merely indicated as it were in skeleton, where the subordinate characters perform (and no more) their accessory parts, where the field is occupied by a single female figure whose internal portrait is set forth in her own words. Moreover the sketch only gives the girl's own deductions, feelings, semiresolutions, granted such premises as hers, and right or wrong it seems to me she might easily arrive at such conclusions: and whilst it may truly be urged that unless white could be black and Heaven Hell my experience (thank God) precludes me from hers, I yet don't see why "the Poet mind" should be less able to construct her from its own inner consciousness than a hundred other unknown quantities. Practical result if you retain *U. the R*, I think it would be well placed last in the secular section.

5. Squad <sup>19</sup> finally rejected for vol. 2., though I keep my commercial eye upon it for Magazine pot-boilers

6 In the *Prince* I entertain a dreadful certainty that I wrote *dye* and a dreadful conviction that the singular of *dice* is *die*. It is a stanza which occurs shortly before his start up the mountain, at the end of his stay with the friendly ferry-boat family, stanza begins "Slip past, slip fast" — will you rectify, and spare me contempt? Spelling, alas, never was my forte.

<sup>19</sup> Her own generic term for a group of miscellaneous poems

7. You will oblige me if you will kindly remove *Bird and Beast* and *Portraits* from among the *Devotional* I too thought that *B and B* would be appropriately followed by *Eve*. Of course, too (if you retain it) *Lowest Room* must shift its quarters Do you know I was originally staggered by "It's up the second pair" — but re-reading and laziness reconcile one to many things, and had it not a certain Patmorean flavour? At this stage of humiliation dare I further avow that I did hope *U the R* possessed a not un-Crabbed aspect? Alas for author's vanity

Thank you for prospective *Atalanta*<sup>20</sup> and *Bruno-catalogue*,<sup>21</sup> which I won't fail to return in due course, and for beloved Cocrillus Prudens,<sup>22</sup> whose acquaintance I hope to make before so very long. Henrietta cheers us by renewed improvement, she and Uncle Henry join in love.<sup>23</sup> I hobble on well enough Still no Jean Ingelow. — I hope, by the by, that *Under the Rose* is less dismal than the *Star's Monument* and *4 Bridges*<sup>24</sup> of oppressive memory: the deduction of *Lowest Room* and *Royal Princess* will still leave vol. 2. of adequate length.

Your affectionately grateful sister

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

P S.

Please don't throw away what pieces you turn out of vol. 2, but kindly preserve them for me I don't know whether I possess elsewhere such correct copies.

<sup>20</sup> Swinburne's new volume

<sup>21</sup> Ford Madox Brown's exhibition of his works Brown was affectionately called Bruno by the Rossettis

<sup>22</sup> William Rossetti says (*Rossetti Papers*, pp 67-68) "Christina urged Dante not to 'purchase the Prudent' but he *did* purchase the Prudent — i e, a separate large Grisct [a drawing] of an alligator — and gave it to her it was disposed of after her death This term 'the Prudent' means 'the Prudent Crocodile,' which figures in Christina's fantastic poem *My Dream* I possess a pencil-sketch of hers (contemporary with the poem, 1855) showing the prudent crocodile in three several actions finally, as he 'shed appropriate tears and wrung his hands'" "The Prudent Crocodile" was one of Gabriel's names for William Morris

<sup>23</sup> Henrietta Polydore was Christina's first cousin, the daughter of Mrs Rossetti's brother Henry, who had Anglicized his name <sup>24</sup> Two poems of Jean Ingelow's

Gabriel sent *Atalanta*, and Christina wrote thanking him for it in the following unpublished letter.

81 High Street, Hastings.  
30th [March 1865]

MY DEAR GABRIEL

THIS is not to bore you in any form, but to announce the book-post transmission herewith of *Atalanta* and the *Catalogue*. What a wonderful treasure of beauty the *Atalanta* is, amazing for delightfulness of sheer beauty genuine thanks to you for giving me so much pleasure. Henrietta also has read it with admiration and enjoyment

There seems some hope of my getting home today week (Thursday), but the weather may detain me

Henrietta's love.

Your affect. sister

C. G. R.

Swinburne was a devoted admirer of Christina and sent her copies of many of his books. One questions just what her attitude towards him may have been. In spite of her praise in her letter to Gabriel, William says<sup>25</sup> that she pasted strips of paper over lines in the central chorus of "*Atalanta*." She responded to his unflinching appreciation of herself by sending him (with some natural trepidation) a copy of *Called to be Saints* on July 26, 1882, and she wrote with evident relief to William on July 28. "Mr Swinburne has acknowledged with consummate graciousness *Called to be Saints*, and gives me great pleasure by liking the verses for Saint Barnabas, Holy Innocents, SS Philip and James I do not think he is at all offended by my offering him the book"<sup>26</sup>

When a question of a trip to Italy with her mother and William arose a little later, she felt the necessity for haste, and she wrote

<sup>25</sup> *Some Reminiscences*, I, 292

<sup>26</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p 121.



Gabriel that she thought the printing of *The Prince's Progress* had better begin, so that she might read the proofs before starting on her travels, but that his woodcuts were so essential to her contentment that she would wait a year for them if need be, "though (in a whisper) six months would better please me" <sup>27</sup> The woodcuts had been the basis of some discussion between them, and Christina had remonstrated mildly that, while the text called for a curly black beard in the case of the prince and a veil over the face of the bride, Gabriel's woodcuts showed neither. She succeeded in getting the veil but not the beard. These matters always appeared of very little consequence to Gabriel, and it is said that, although he went to the maze at Hampton Court to prepare the second illustration for *The Prince's Progress*, when he got there he refused to enter it for fear of getting lost and just took the plan from the sixpenny guidebook. As a result, instead of seeing through the half-opened window a *picture* of a labyrinth, one sees only a plan! <sup>28</sup>

Christina asked him if she might send the proofs through his brotherly hands instead of direct to Mr Macmillan, so that he might put the finishing touch to their arrangement and attend to the business details. That Gabriel muddled things somewhat is apparent from the following unpublished letter.

166 Albany Street

N W.

Wednesday night [1865]

MY DEAR GABRIEL

I am truly sorry for annoyance brought on you by your brotherliness in helping me as to business matters. Mr Macmillan writes under a complete misapprehension as to my Italian-tour-fund, precarious indeed if it depended on *P P* instead of on unfailing family bounty. However, now I will write direct to him and set matters as straight as words can set them. I am perfectly willing

<sup>27</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p 95

<sup>28</sup> W B Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, II, 45

to let vol 2 appear on the same terms as vol 1, and very likely these terms are both what suit him best, and what in the long run will do at least as well for me as any others. So please wash your hands of the vexatious business, I will settle it now myself with him. What made him combine my Italian holiday with the proceeds of vol 2 I know not: it may have been a guess founded on (apparent) probability, or he may have supposed that my motive in wishing to get through the proofs before setting off was to bag the money, — of course it *was* merely not to delay the publication.

Mama's love

Your obliged affect. sister

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

The Heimanns have excellent news from Charles.<sup>29</sup> Sir Harry Parke<sup>30</sup> has been most auspicious, and Charles thinks his most influential letter in that important quarter was the one you kindly procured him from Mr. Layard<sup>31</sup>

Christina was now tasting the joys of success, and they reached a high point in 1868, when Mr. Gladstone was reported to have repeated "Maiden-Song" by heart in a mixed company!<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Charles Heimann, son of Dr Adolph Heimann, had gone to Japan

<sup>30</sup> I have been unable to identify Sir Harry Parke

<sup>31</sup> Sir Austen Henry Layard, 1817-1894, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, excavator of Nineveh

<sup>32</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 197

## X

### CHRISTINA ROSSETTI AND HER LETTERS

IT is remarkable that the humor which often shows itself in Christina Rossetti's letters survived amid all her conscientious scruples and self-prohibitions. In 1861 when Gabriel wrote to ask her for her story "Folio Q," so that he could show it to Macmillan,<sup>1</sup> it was discovered that someone had suggested that it seemed to raise a moral problem, and Christina had destroyed the manuscript. The tale dealt with a man whose doom it was not to be reflected in a looking-glass, and William considered it the best story she ever wrote. The most innocent diversions were likely to bring on an attack of conscience. She thoroughly enjoyed Italian literature, but she decided not to read it for fear of meeting improper passages, she said of *Parsifal* that she would not dare witness such a treatment of such a subject;<sup>2</sup> and she even gave up playing chess when she found that she enjoyed winning.<sup>3</sup> In *Letter and Spirit* we get an idea of the compensation she expected to receive for these renunciations. "For the books we now forbear to read, we shall one day be endued with wisdom and knowledge; for the music we will not listen to, we shall join in the song of the redeemed. For the pictures from which we turn, we shall gaze unabashed on the Beatific Vision. For the companionship we shun, we shall be welcomed into angelic society, and the communion of triumphant saints. For the amusements we avoid, we shall keep the Supreme jubilee. For the pleasures we miss, we shall abide, and forever abide, in the rapture of heaven."<sup>4</sup>

Her comments on the authors she had read are illuminating. She was "quite disappointed" with *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, of Milton she said she could not "warm towards him,

<sup>1</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 162

<sup>2</sup> Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p. 124

<sup>3</sup> Memoir by W. M. Rossetti, in *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*,  
p. lxvi

PUZZLE BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

(From Marshall's *Ladies' Daily Remembrancer* for 1850, to which Christina contributed various enigmas and charades. She gave a copy to her mother, who made a note of those by Christina and also wrote in the answers to all the puzzles as she guessed them.)



even let alone all theological questions ”<sup>5</sup> She was distressed at Mr. Gladstone’s omitting from his list of poetesses the one name which she felt the most formidable of those known to her, Augusta Webster<sup>6</sup> (Mrs Webster had tried to enlist Christina in the ranks of women’s suffrage, but without success<sup>7</sup>) In a letter to Dora Greenwell in 1863 she says, “What think you of Jean Ingelow, the wonderful poet? I have not yet read the volume, but reviews with copious extracts have made me aware of a new eminent name having arisen among us I want to know who she is, what she is like, where she lives All I have heard is an uncertain rumour that she is aged twenty-one, and is one of three sisters resident with their mother. A proud mother, I should think ”<sup>8</sup> At the time of the second impression of *Goblin Market* Christina complained that the sight of an eighth edition of Jean Ingelow’s poems was imparting a greenish tinge to her complexion<sup>9</sup> She had a great regard for Isaac Williams, the Puseyite poet,<sup>10</sup> and she thoroughly enjoyed Mrs Gaskell’s *Cranford*

She wrote of Gabriel’s “Blessed Damsel” “Beautiful indeed is ‘The Blessed Damsel’ even whilst I agree with you that it falls short of expressing the highest view, which yet (I hope) it does not contradict.”<sup>11</sup> In an unpublished letter she expresses her admiration for several of his poems and comments on Browning’s

*30 Torrington Square, London W C.*  
*April 7. 1891.*

MY DEAR LILIAN

How beautiful was your kind gift of Easter flowers. I truly thank you for them and for the letter their companion

I fancy we fix upon different Brownings as our favorites, tho’ on the whole I endorse your “Abt Vogler ” “Saul” rather charms me in parts than satisfies me as a whole. “Cristina” is not one of

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy M Stuart, *Christina Rossetti* (London, 1930), p 106

<sup>6</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p 175

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp 96-97

<sup>8</sup> Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p 161

<sup>9</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p 70

<sup>10</sup> Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p 165

<sup>11</sup> Mary F Sandars, *The Life of Christina Rossetti* (London, 1930), p 257

my predilect Amongst the most interesting to me are "Cleon" and "Karshish"

"The Blessed Damozel" is beautiful indeed were you not a little wonderstruck by the *fierce shake* of "Time like a pulse" —? Another of my chief admirations is "Staff and Scrip" "Sister Helen" is an awful lesson on an awful subject And amongst the Sonnets pray weigh "Lost Days" and "Vain Virtues"

Affectionately yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Although Christina was inclined to be shy, she recognized the desirability of meeting people, and I have some letters which indicate that the Rossettis entertained at least occasionally On the thirteenth of February (the year date is lacking) they were certainly having a "tea party"

*56 Euston Square, N W*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> February [1873<sup>2</sup>]*

DEAR MR. BROWNING

We hope one or two of our friends will be with us on Thursday evening the 13th (8 o'clock), and proud and pleased we should be if you especially would accept our welcome and our cup of tea

Pray accept this with my Mother's compliments and believe me

Sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

An answer, please

*56 Euston Square, N.W.*  
*Saturday, 8th.*

*An answer, please.*

DEAR MISS LEIFCHILD <sup>12</sup>

I heard such a good account of your health not very long ago, that I venture to hope you will give us the pleasure of your com-

<sup>12</sup> The Leifchilds were intimate friends of Charles Cayley, Christina's suitor, and through him became known to the Rossettis

pany to tea next Thursday 13th (8 o'clock) if you are disengaged  
A few of our friends promise to be with us Pray accept my  
Mother's compliments, make mine to your sisters and believe me

Very truly yours

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

She wrote Gabriel in 1865, apropos of a possible visit from Jean Ingelow: "*To be tooked and well shooked* is what I eminently need socially, so Jean Ingelow will be quite appropriate treatment, should she transpire she has not yet done so" <sup>13</sup>

The Rossetti family had a number of American acquaintances William notes that in 1867 Elihu Burritt, the learned blacksmith from Connecticut, called on Christina and produced a very agreeable impression <sup>14</sup> Another American who called was Cincinnatus Miller, later known as Joaquin Miller, who produced a less agreeable impression by his determination to dedicate a book of poems to the Rossettis <sup>15</sup> Gabriel disliked the notion, but considered there were no grounds for refusal, Christina felt some hesitation in sanctioning it, not knowing what the book might contain, William did not care for the religious poems. <sup>16</sup> Later Christina received a volume of Emily Dickinson's poems, which she offered to William with the comment that "she had a wonderfully Blakean gift, but therewithal a startling recklessness of poetic ways and means." <sup>17</sup>

About 1855 Miss Henrietta Rintoul, <sup>18</sup> who had taken up photography as a diversion, made some photographs of Christina The new art interested the Rossettis much and later formed a link with Charles Dodgson, who was an enthusiastic amateur

<sup>13</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 84

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 241

<sup>15</sup> An article entitled "Recollections of the Rossetti dinner," by Joaquin Miller, was published in the *Overland Monthly* in February 1920

<sup>16</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 211

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 176

<sup>18</sup> Daughter of the editor of the *Spectator*, for which William Rossetti was art critic



practitioner, and who made many photographs of the whole family Christina wrote to him as follows

[1864<sup>2</sup>]

MY DEAR MR DODGSON

We are not at all uneasy about the Clergy Trading Act, but sincerely obliged for your kind trouble-taking agency I hope my list will prove intelligible. We want, please —

	<i>Copies.</i>
My sister in the rainy group	12
Do                      other group	12
My Mother playing at chess with Gabriel	3
The group <i>not</i> including my sister	4
My Mother in this same	9
Mr Le Gros	2
Mr Cayley	1
A large oval of Gabriel seated, holding a wide-awake, nearly or quite full-face	2
Also from my brother's sketches:	
His wife standing (numbered 91)	3
A lady at work (----- 73)	2

Delightful it would be, that possible visit to Oxford We contemplate it in a spirit of vague approbation. Stirred up by the kind offer of such a Showman, and by a wish to see the sights of Oxford in general and Gabriel's handiwork in particular, weighed down by family immobility, — we tremble in the balance, though I fear the leaden element preponderates It is characteristic of us to miss opportunities. A year or two ago I had a chance of seeing Cambridge, and of course missed it <sup>19</sup>

Mrs. Julia Cameron, a sister of Mrs. Prinsep, and therefore aunt to D G. Rossetti's friend, Val Prinsep, met Christina about

<sup>19</sup> The rest of the letter is missing

1862 She was another famous amateur photographer, and in 1866 she had called on Christina and Mrs Rossetti and presented them with five magnificent photographs <sup>20</sup>

*30 Torrington Square  
W.C.*

*May 24th [after 1876]*

MY DEAR MADAM

Your gift reached me not till this afternoon I should like to thank you in proportion to your kindness and to its beauty. It far surpasses anything I anticipated, and sets before me in lovely guise Gabriel's record of his poor short-lived LIZZIE I did not know that it was possible to produce such a photograph

Gratefully and truly yours

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

Apparently Jean Ingelow put Christina in touch with her American publishers, Roberts Brothers, who thereafter published the American editions of Christina's books

*166 Albany St N.W.  
3rd January 1866*

SIR

Through the kindness of Miss Ingelow I have been favoured with your letter of the 29th

Allow me through you to thank Mess<sup>rs</sup> Roberts Brothers for their liberal proposal. I am well aware that I can put in no claim to any such arrangement, but shall gladly accept your offer, having had no dealings on the subject with any other American publisher I will therefore direct that a copy of *Goblin Market* be forwarded to your London address and perhaps I had better mention that the whole volume belongs to me with the exception

<sup>20</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p 202

of 5 pieces (*Round Tower at Fhansi — Maude Clare — Uphill — Birthday — Apple-gathering*) which are the property of two publishers. If I can manage it my forthcoming volume shall accompany *Goblin Market*, but I am not sure whether it can be sent you quite yet, as of course I must consult Mr. Macmillan, to whom indeed a portion of the copyright belongs

Pray, Sir, believe me

Sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

In *Rossetti Papers* <sup>21</sup> William noted on March 5, 1870, that Christina had just about finished a prose story called "Commonplace," which she planned to combine with several other stories, written previously, in a book to be published by F. S. Ellis. On September 30, 1853, Gabriel had sent Christina a message about one of these earlier stories, "Nick" <sup>22</sup> William says that this story had been entrusted to James Hannay with a view to publication <sup>23</sup> In January 1866 Gabriel wrote Christina that her "*Hero* is splendid. I don't know if I'd ever read it. You ought to write more such things." <sup>24</sup> In the following letter Christina asks to have returned all the stories she intended to use in the volume called *Commonplace*, except the title piece and "Vanna's Twins." It is evident that the former had not yet been written, and this may also have been the case with "Vanna's Twins," which was, by the way, a great favorite with Swinburne <sup>25</sup> Of the other stories in this collection, "The Lost Titian" was published in the *Crayon*, New York, about 1856, "Hero" in the *Argosy*, January 1866, and "The Waves. . ." "Some Pros and Cons," and "A Safe Investment" had appeared in 1870 in the *Churchman's Shilling Magazine*. Who had them at the time of this letter I have not

<sup>21</sup> Page 500

<sup>22</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 113

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184

<sup>25</sup> Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p. 278

been able to discover The book, *Commonplace*, was never a success, and Christina herself looked on it with disfavor in later years <sup>26</sup>

56 Euston Square, London, NW.  
Old England  
12th April 1869

DEAR SIR

It is so long since the volume of my prose trifles was mentioned between us, that I hope it is not now premature to beg that you will oblige me by returning the little printed and manuscript pieces, as we have not duplicates of all of them by us This is the list (printed) 1. *Hero, a Metamorphosis*, 2 *Some Pros and Cons about Pews*, 3. *Nick*, 4 *The Lost Titian*, 5. *The Waves of this Troublesome World*, and (M.S.) 6 *A Safe Investment*. These I think are all

Pray pardon the trouble I give you and believe me

Truly yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

The following letter to Mrs Anne Gilchrist has never been published in full, although both Mackenzie Bell and Miss Sandars have used one paragraph from it Christina was at Penkill Castle several times in the sixties, the visit referred to in this letter was in 1869.

166 Albany St. London  
NW.  
Saturday night.

MY DEAR MRS. GILCHRIST

Pray accept my warm thanks for your most kind welcome of us both. I waited for my cousin Henrietta Polydore's <sup>27</sup> answer be-

<sup>26</sup> Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p. 278

<sup>27</sup> Henry Francis Polidori, brother of Mrs Rossetti, had modified his surname to Polydore (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 31)

fore writing again, and now have her grateful acknowledgements as well as my own to offer you. Almanack before me I have been calculating times and probabilities, — and sad to say have been compelled to arrive at a somewhat unsatisfactory result. Mrs Scott, with whom I am going to Penkill, has fixed our starting day as next Thursday, and she today spoke of our being away (including a visit she must pay in Edinburgh) 6 weeks. This I find must bring us to the 12th July, if we really prolong our stay in the north so long and then it would not be possible for Henrietta and me to have the pleasure of being with you before Monday the 16th, because as she is a Roman Catholic she must stay in London over Sunday on account of her chapel. Now the 16th can by no stretch be described as “the early part of July”: and as you are going away at the beginning of August we must by no means encroach on your hospitality later than is convenient to you. Therefore I fear I must submit to the disappointment for Henrietta and myself of not visiting Brookbank this Summer. Will you pardon the useless trouble I have unintentionally given you? I have only just now realized how late we *may* get, though I am not *sure* that I shall be away quite so long. If we had managed our attractive visit to you we must of course have ended it on Saturday on Henrietta’s chapel’s account, but I did mean to make bold to ask you kindly to tide us over Friday by allowing Henrietta an egg or such like for her abstinent dinner.

If the end of my Penkill sojourn deprives me of seeing you, its beginning mulcts me of a visit to the Isle of Wight in which I was promised to meet Tennyson — poor me! This invitation was only given me yesterday, too late to be closed with. however I am not certain that in any case I should have screwed myself up to accept it, as I am shy amongst strangers and think things formidable.

Please give my love to the young people, whose recollection of me I must try to revive some day in person if opportunity offers.

Commonplace.  
Chapter 1.

temptation - Sea — any name not in  
Uchar will do — Bournemouth — Sea  
Gulf.

The air fresh and sunny, the sea blue  
rippling not rolling, everything green  
in it and out of sight coming on merrily,  
active over straws and fluff, a  
butterfly abroad for a change, a  
hardy butterfly dancing through  
air in and out and round about  
us: A row of houses all alike.

By the sea, all alike so far as streets  
to and symmetrical doors and  
windows could make them so, but one  
in the monotonous row was worth  
noting for the sake of more numerous  
inches and early roses in its like etc.

Commonplace.  
Chapter 1.

There I stood on the platform at H. W.  
by my three boxes, one carpet-bag,  
full of charts and bundle of  
papers, three I stood with a courteous  
in matter and two civil porters  
telling me that not one lodging was  
to be had throughout H. W. Another  
such an announcement might not be  
greatly signified for London whences; I  
was left then three hours off, but  
in particular occasion it did matter.  
I was weakened by recent illness,  
runny down had shaken me; I was  
tired and thirsty, for my tea, and things  
of catching cold I had wrapped up  
well: so that when these polite officers  
told that they could not point out a  
lodging for me I felt more inclined to cry  
I hope any body suspected. One of  
them noticing how pale and weak I



For aught we know William may today have reached Naples,  
but we cannot calculate his movements with certainty

Gratefully and truly yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

And now I have awkwardly left to the words (though not to the feeling) of a P S my hope that you and yours will enjoy the happiness of finding Mrs Burrowes better when you visit her in August, that you will have a pleasant stay with her, a successful letting, and a prosperous return home

Her letters about her own work are certainly more modest than those of most authors. The following note is to George Routledge and Company, publishers of *Sing-Song*

*5 Gloucester Place — Folkestone  
Thursday evening. [1871]*

DEAR SIRS

Though I write from Folkestone I will ask you to send proofs to Euston Square, as my stay here beyond the 26th is altogether uncertain.

I hope the delightfully early period at which you think S S<sup>28</sup> may be ready will not entail too great a pressure of haste on Mr Hughes. My brother, writing about the present proof, seems to think some of the illustrations may have suffered from speedy execution. but those at p p 93, 94 I particularly like

Mainly on account of slight alterations in the text I must beg a revise. I gladly make the transposition you suggest of p p 90, 91, and think it improves the sequence of the rhymes as it happens.

Very truly yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

<sup>28</sup> *Sing-Song* was published in 1872.



The next letter, referring also to *Sing-Song*, was probably addressed to Burn and Company, who were the binders of the book. The color of the bindings and their priority is a problem for bibliographers. I have one bound in green that belonged to C. L. Dodgson, and one in blue that was Edmund Gosse's copy.

*12 Bloomsbury Square* <sup>29</sup> — *W C*

(The above is my address till,  
say, the end of this month.  
after that, 56 Euston Square)

*11 September 1875.*

DEAR SIRS

I have just been sending to Messrs Routledge for a "Sing Song" I wanted to buy for a friend, and I find one cannot be procured. This I suppose arises from the *bound* copies being exhausted, and if so I hope you will agree with me in thinking it a pity that the stock should not be kept up in a state so far available as to meet any chance order.

Of course I write to you, not to Mr. Routledge, in a matter which primarily concerns ourselves. Will you favour me with an answer? and also by giving the suitable directions for binding more copies, if the matter stands as I conjecture? My common sense rejects any such wild supposition as that the edition is exhausted!

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Christina's unfailing courtesy is apparent even in the most trivial notes. William recalls having told her when she was barely seventeen that "she would soon become so polite it would be impossible to live with her" <sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The address of the Misses Polidori from April 1874 to September 1876

<sup>30</sup> Memoir in *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. lx

*30 Torrington Square — London — W C*  
*15th August.<sup>31</sup>*

DEAR SIR

It cannot but be agreeable to me to find some one taking an interest in my work. There is one more little book to be added to your list "Sing Song," an illustrated volume of nursery rhymes published by Routledge, this completes what I have as yet brought out.

Allow me, Sir, to remain

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

In 1878 Christina's poem "Yet a little while" appeared in the *University Magazine*. When she received a copy of the periodical she was horrified at the company in which she found herself, and when asked for another contribution she wrote the following note to the editor. One can quite understand her feelings when one looks through the articles and stories. It opens with "The Hand on Peter's Keys" by M. Le Marquis de Nangis, which I think she would not care for, and goes on with "On Miracle" by F. R. Conder, which would be even less to her taste. William Rossetti contributed two lectures on Shelley to later numbers, but the January issue seems to have marked Christina's only appearance.

*30 Torrington Square — W.C.*  
*14th June 1878*

DEAR SIR

Your letter puts me in an embarrassment, not from any defect in it but (let me hope) from a misapprehension on my own part.

No. 1 of your new series is the only no. of the *University Magazine* which I have seen, & therefore my impression is based upon it alone. Allow me to speak from that impression, & to express

<sup>31</sup> Between 1872 and 1874

my apprehension that my one — no. [*sic*] colleagues are of a school of thought antagonistic to my own. If so, I am sure you will kindly set me free from my quasi-engagement to write on demand for the Magazine for I never could be at my ease or happy in literary company with persons who look down upon what I look up to. I have not *played* at Xtianity, and therefore I cannot play at unbelief.

Yet if I am making a mistake in my judgment it will require no slight forgiveness on your part to forgive me may I ask so much?

As to my brother D. G. being photographed for publication, I do not fancy it will fall in with his views but of course I cannot be certain

Permit me to sum up all by remaining with real good will

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

I have studied the "table of contents," & that leaves me in doubt

Christina's letters to Gabriel have always a certain interest, no matter how casual their content. Of the two that I transcribe here the former is dated in William Rossetti's hand "74, or perhaps 75"; the second I have dated tentatively "Spring 1880" because in a letter of Gabriel's to his mother in November 1879 he says, "I hardly dare hope that Aunt Eliza is seriously improving,"<sup>32</sup> and in the final paragraph of the present letter her recovery is mentioned. In addition to this, a letter of Christina's to Gabriel in December 1879 reports that she is "hugging hopes of getting together before long enough verse for a *small* fresh volume,"<sup>33</sup> and in the letter in question she says, "I think perhaps I will bring a small mass of verse with me if we come, and moot the volume question."

<sup>32</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, II, 355

<sup>33</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 83.

*56 Euston Square — N W.*

*Friday 29*

MY DEAR GABRIEL

Let me renew my thanks for the poor dear "Elephant" book, whose pathetic ending is truly painful & goes to one's heart. Delicious is the prosperous elephant ladling out rice to mendicants I wish all Elephants were prosperous

A few days ago I saw Mme Bodichon, who sends a cordial message of remembrance to you, & would like some afternoon to pay your studio a visit "between lights" — so very likely she will do so What a fine looking personage she is She let me look at a number of her paintings too, which make up quite an interesting gallery, from Algiers, Sussex, &. —

With Mamma's love

Your affectionate sister

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

I saw Mr. Brown's Sheffield portrait the other day. He is invariably cordial & kindly, — the man, I mean, not the canvas — & even now it might be the sitter!!

*Friday.*

*30 Torrington Square W.C.*

MY DEAR GABRIEL

This is a weighty epistle, to be concocted with pondering.

Its essence is *yes, thank you*: but now for ways and means Our Mother is perfectly able to "fly" hence to you, and our own accustomed fly-master (close by) can supply our vehicle As to bedrooms: do not think of vacating yours, if it can be helped. Could 2 beds be got into the little breakfast-room adjoining yours? — this would be first rate for us, if our habit of rising about 7 or 7.30 would not make us too noisy neighbours for you. In such a case, could not *we* have the staircase-room? to which

our Mother entertains no objection. and if in any room that is in question you cannot conveniently prepare two beds, we will keep the peace in one. Thank you for re-assurance as to the mood of your housekeeper

Lastly, when shall we arrive to be your guests? We offer you either next week from Monday to Saturday both inclusive or else, a fortnight beginning on the 18th, that is, beginning next Monday fortnight. Holy Week lies between the two periods I specify, and has to be provided for

As to our visitors, I don't think you need apprehend a flood. I don't expect anybody to pursue us to Chelsea, tho' as you observe, they would not affect you. I think perhaps I will bring a small mass of verse with me if we come, and moot the volume question

Mamma sends you a dear love and likes very much to be with you again. Aunt Eliza also sends love and is pleased at your sympathy in her progress — appreciable now — towards recovery.

Always your affectionate

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

As to *bed curtains* we need not draw them

Christina, her mother, and her two aunts had lodgings in Fayrelead in July and August 1881, whence Christina wrote her old friend, Mrs. Heimann.

*Fayrelead — Sevenoaks*  
*Thursday. [1881]*

MY DEAR MRS HEIMANN

This morning your letter reached me by way of Torrington Sq. But indeed we have been out of town some little while. We came hither on the 16th of July, and here we hope to remain till at any

rate next Saturday week. Do not you know familiarly this part of England? — rich in woody slopes and a wide-spread green refreshingness. My *3 days* toils in search of a lodging are amply rewarded by the delightful quarters we now occupy. First we thought of going to Edmonton, and hearing of a promising cottage there down I went to inspect — but after seeming likely to gain our point, the really eligible cottage gave us the slip. The attraction to Edmonton lay in the circumstance that Mr Burrows (long of Albany St.) is its Vicar. Next I tried Hampstead, all in vain. Then I started for Tunbridge Wells, but finding myself midway at Sevenoaks, here I stopped and explored, and all has ended something in the style of fairy literature, “and they were happy ever after.” Not only Mamma and I but both my aunts are here, and we revel in drives here and there about this charming neighbourhood. today we drove to Knole Park, and there strayed about and sat the fly waiting for us, and thus we took a walk of such an extent as might well beforehand have seemed quite out of the question. — Of course I have been mindful of our time-honoured correspondence but I thought my new volume might very fairly open the campaign!

So you are at Westgate-on-sea, a place I have heard well spoken of. Your party sounds a very pleasant one, and I hope Nettie <sup>34</sup> as well as her brothers appreciates the delights of a sea beach. Pray give Golde <sup>35</sup> my love. I hope she is not very strict as to frocks and boots with her enterprising young flock! William and his family are gone to Littlehampton, a place which (like Westgate) I have not seen.

Different indeed are individual modes of conducting love affairs. May the particular form of courtship selected by your hosts lead brightly up to a bright result. It is looking rather too

<sup>34</sup> Grandchild of Mrs Heimann

<sup>35</sup> Mrs Heimann's daughter

far ahead to think about Nettie's methods as yet<sup>1</sup> but when and if her turn comes — — however, I am so very likely not to be there to see, that I need not go into details

And after all we missed you at the Ragged School sale, but we heard afterwards from Mrs. Catterson that you and she really had attended, and I thank you for the affectionate fact My Aunts and I got there after you had left but not knowing this, Aunt Eliza and I lingered a good while on the look out for you both. My dear Mother — who sends love to you and to Golde — dropped out of the party, but sent a nice little sum of money for me to spend in favour of the charity. And I was quite lavish (!) in buying presents for the Endsleigh Gardens branch of our lofty house<sup>36</sup>

Always my dear old Friend's affectionate

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Another and later letter to this same friend, while of no special importance, is quite characteristic of Christina.

*30 Torrington Square — W.C [1886-1887]*<sup>37</sup>

*Friday morning*

MY DEAR MRS. HEIMANN

I am inert<sup>1</sup> but so truly obliged for your most helpful omnibus lore. I see with satisfaction that thus I can escape (if I like) that formidable Trafalgar Sq. As to your "seeing me back" that is the sole point at which imperatively and inflexibly I draw the line

Well — shall I come? (*see ante* "inert.") If so, please fix a day *you* not I. But the brilliant idea occurs to me that ere

<sup>36</sup> William Rossetti's family

<sup>37</sup> Written on black-edged note paper Mrs Rossetti died in 1886

so very long you may be located if not in Red Lion Square at least in some habitat nearer my own Shall we await that welcome moment? Of course I shall want to see how you, my dear old Friend, look in your new quarters. Mrs Catterson was speaking of *flats* the other day, but mentioned none but high prices

Thank you for thinking kindly of us all in our winter or autumn ages My Aunts are much as I may now expect them to be, with no very marked changes I do not flourish, but it is a great thing that I keep about and manage my small matters indeed, according to my own standard, I may report fairly of myself I hope you may do at least as much concerning yourself. I wonder when the weather will allow Lucy to return from Bournemouth and with the children to brighten up William's home. By what I was told lately the DGR fountain is really not very far from being erected.<sup>38</sup>

Always your loving  
CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

In 1882 John H Ingram was about to begin his Eminent Women Series, and he wrote to Christina at Birchington, where she and her mother were trying to cheer Dante Gabriel's last days, asking her to undertake one of the volumes. She at first thought she might attempt the life of Adelaide Anne Procter, but dropped the idea, as she wrote William, because it occurred to her that Anna Mary Watts (daughter of the William Howitts) was a far better person to do it, as "she was in the heart of that social set instead of (as I was) on its merest outskirts"<sup>39</sup> She makes this suggestion among others to Mr. Ingram in the following letter

<sup>38</sup> Designed and executed by Ford Madox Brown (base by John Seddon) and erected by public subscription in 1887

<sup>39</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p 110



*Westcliff Bungalow*  
*Birchington-on-sea*  
*Kent.*

*March 13. [1882]*

DEAR SIR

I waited to hear from my brother again before answering your truly obliging letter, and now I find he has forestalled me in suggesting to you that Mrs. A. A. Watts (if she would undertake the work) would have a great advantage over myself in writing Miss Proctor's [*sic*] biography, — the advantage of real acquaintance-ship, over slight and mere-surface contact. I will venture to conclude, on such valid grounds, that you will aim at substituting her pen for mine. And indeed I must go further and admit that for the present I find it impossible to commence work, and equally impossible to assign a moment for commencing. Hold me, therefore, excused. Not even the promised cooperation for which I warmly thank you can secure me the leisure, and most of all the mental leisure, needed for an undertaking which I ought either to execute well or to decline.

I understand you are glad to receive names of ladies who might be inclined to join in your scheme and also be of talents to do you credit. Permit me to suggest four friends of my own who (if willing) might I think meet your views

Mrs Scott

92 Cheyne Walk — S W.

This is the wife of W B Scott the Artist and Poet, herself being not without literary practice <sup>40</sup>

Mrs. Gemmer

40 Maryland Road

Harrow Road — W.

Mrs Gemmer is also known as "Gerda Fay" under which nom-

<sup>40</sup> William Rossetti (*Some Reminiscences*, I, 132) says that she was a sprightly little woman with no very great intellectual ability

de-plume, or sometimes under her own name, she has published a considerable amount of verse <sup>41</sup>

Mrs Edgcombe  
Linden House  
Headington — Oxford —

is a really clever woman and at one time took a little to literature. I am not sure whether she is likely to prove accessible.

Miss Rintoul  
35 Devonshire Street  
Portland Place — W

An invaluable accurate as well as a practised writer: daughter of the able Editor of the "Spectator" of the same name. I should think you might be fortunate in adding any of these ladies to your staff, all of them having more or less moved in a literary circle. Miss Rintoul pre-eminently so, and in a brilliant circle which her own talents enabled her to adorn.

I perceive from a letter of my brother's that he has probably already told you what he knows of Miss Matilda Hays.<sup>42</sup> I do not recollect ever to have met her

Allow me to hope that your plan will be worthily carried out.

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Mrs Rossetti and Christina were always most appreciative of Mr Watts's qualities and, like Gabriel, called upon him when they needed help

<sup>41</sup> Caroline M Gemmer, author of *Babyland or Pretty Rhymes* and *Children of the Sun Poems for the Young* under her own name, and of *Lyrics and Idylls* and *Poetry for Play Hours* under the name of Gerda Fay

<sup>42</sup> Matilda M Hays was the author of *Helen Stanley* (London, 1846), and *Adrienne Hope* (London, 1862), as well as the translator of *Mauprat* and *Fadette*, by George Sand

30 Torrington Sq W.C.  
 Saturday  
 24 March 1883

DEAR MR WATTS

Looking round for a friend in need, I remark you! Not for myself, however, and not seeking any answer except in the improbable case that you can suggest something practical.

Will you oblige me by keeping by you and not utterly forgetting all about the following particulars —

Dr. Agostino Olivieri <sup>43</sup> (an *Italian*)

LL.D., Ph D., Lit.D

5 Bull Street

Birmingham

Conversant with Italian, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese translates from or into these languages, and in Italian can compose either in prose or in verse Would be glad of copying, either literary or *law* to which latter he is used Would pay expenses of work sent him at Birmingham and of returning the same.

My sister and poor Gabriel (as well as William and our Mother) have all at various times helped this friend of ours whom not one of us has ever seen, but of whom my sister knew something communicated by him in confidence to her and not to the rest of us. The letter in question she of course destroyed. Work of his, solid and perhaps learned work,<sup>44</sup> is found under his name in the British Museum Catalogue. He corresponds with ease in English, — this suggests that all his languages are competently known, Italian being a matter of course. I understand his circumstances to be so precarious that he would thankfully undertake *any* literary or other work to which he is adapted. his health, however, is not strong.

<sup>43</sup> See *post*, p 196

<sup>44</sup> "I believe" crossed out

I have written to my publishers and others all in vain, seeking work for him. To you I write not hopefully and anxious not to be tiresome, yet thinking you will pardon me under the circumstances, — you, assuredly, not being one to grudge efforts for a distressed friend. Don't answer me, and I shall feel that I cannot have bored you unpardonably!

With my Mother's friendliest remembrances

Very truly yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

I include the following letter in the hope that someone may help me to identify the mysterious "G." I have been unable to do so myself.

*30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
30th July 1886*

MY DEAR MR. WATTS

I have just received the enclosed. G called yesterday but I would not see him, and his letter alludes in one place to this call. Neither will I now answer the contents of his letter, tho' I will acknowledge its receipt. I fear all looks very black, noting what you tell me.

Most truly your obliged

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

In 1883 Eric S. Robertson<sup>45</sup> published *English Poetesses*, in which some pages<sup>46</sup> dealt with Christina. He sent her the galley

<sup>45</sup> Mr Robertson in 1886, as editor of the series "Great Writers," asked W M Rossetti to write a volume on Keats, which he agreed to do. Soon after, Robertson obtained a professorship in India and severed his connection with the series

<sup>46</sup> Pages 338-348

proofs of these pages, which I now have. She returned them with corrections and the following letter

*Church Hill*  
*Birchington-on-sea.*  
*August 27 1883*

DEAR SIR

Pray reprint the pieces you have selected.

I have gone thro' the proof, except the mere reprinted verse, — and I have made various marginal *marks* with a *purple* pencil to which I now go on to refer.

My Father's name had (I think) better be written in the Italian form *Gabriele*, this occurs twice at the outset.

"Anachronism" with *double n* seems to have escaped your eye.

Is there not some error in the sentence in which I have marked "numerous"?

"Cinque-centist."

"— verse", of course "verses"

The date of "Speaking Likenesses" is 1874, tho' as it was a Xmas book it may possibly be dated 1875: I have not a copy at hand to refer to. The separate editions of "Goblin Market" and "Prince's Progress" have long been exhausted, and the 2 volumes with slight subtractions and augmentations are now fused into one as "Poems" I forget the exact date of this, but it is easily accessible as it is the edition now on sale. Perhaps you may wish to know what other volumes I have published. "Seek and Find" (S P C K.) 1879 — "A Pageant and other Poems" 1881 — "Called to be Saints" (S.P.C.K.) 1881 — "Letter and Spirit" (S.P.C.K.) 1883 I think the 3 volumes published by the S P C.K. are undated, but the actual dates are as I give them

"— goblin curl": why "*goblin*"? also, why "delicious" dream? Nothing can be further from my intention. (*see original text*!)

“The Prince’s *Story*” — of course should be “Progress” —. “Elixir” I should add “of life,” — unless you consider that the only elixir ever aimed at was *of life*

I venture to make the above suggestions, subject entirely to your approval. Wishing you a good success with your book I remain

Sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Christina consistently refused to bind herself to publish any work that might have to be produced by a specific date, and she explains in the following letter her feelings on the subject

*30 Torrington Square — London — W C.  
November 24. 1885.*

MY DEAR MRS. KINGSLEY <sup>47</sup>

Before all else pray let me thank you for the beautiful present you have made me and for the great kindness of your accompanying letter. It will be my own fault if I am none the better for the one or any the worse for the other, for praise such as yours ought rather to humble than to puff me up. I have begun reading “Out of the Deep” aloud to my dearest Mother, and have gone thro’ 1 and 2 and if you will not think me presumptuous I pick out as favorites one on p. 24, on pp. 29, 30, p. 34, pp. 63, 64. I like my copy all the better because you have written my name in it.

And now for the other point. I should like very much to see my name on Miss Kingsley’s staff, but I never had my verse writing power so under command as to be able to count on its exercise, and my last little book pretty well exhausted my last scrap. Now

<sup>47</sup> Wife of Charles Kingsley

I am feeling as if I may have written my final book, — notwithstanding a hope that it may not turn out so after all! Yet in such a mood I dare not make or imply any promise of a contribution, and must beg to remain your *obscure* well-wisher. Please do not think me disobliging for not exerting a power I have no certainty of possessing

Allow me to hope, dear Madam, that your health is not a source to you of acute suffering, and to consider myself

Truly and gratefully

your friend

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

This letter to the editor of *Wide Awake*<sup>48</sup> is illustrative of Christina's scrupulous standard of honesty.

*30 Torrington Square — London — W.C.  
England  
October 11 1882.*

DEAR MADAM

Perhaps my last letter (containing my receipt) is already in your hands. If so, you are aware that I have been so fortunate as to get my Xmas Carol into the January "Macmillan." But now I observe printed at the foot of the "Wide Awake" wrapper. —

"London. James Clarke and Co  
13 Fleet Street" —.

I hope this does not indicate that *Wide Awake* is *published* in *London* as well as in *Boston*. if so, I must in common fairness explain my mistake to Mr. Macmillan's Editor. Indeed, I have already written to him stating what I fear is the case, and he has

<sup>48</sup> Ella F. Pratt, Charles Pratt, editors *Wide Awake* ran from 1875 to 1893, when it was merged with *St Nicholas*.

replied most kindly, setting me free in case of need from any obligation towards him altho' desirous if feasible to retain the Carol. Will you very kindly tell me whether or not any question of copyright forbids simultaneous publication of the Carol by Mr Lothrop <sup>49</sup> in Boston and by Mr. Macmillan here in London? and also whether Macmillan's Magazine issued on the 22nd or 23rd December will in fact be *preceded* in the London Market by Wide Awake? for if so, it materially alters matters as I imagined them to exist

Thanking you in anticipation for the reply I look forward to, I remain

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

I am anxious, but am mainly anxious simply to do what is fair to all parties

These two letters to Edmund Gosse I lent to Miss Mary Sandars when she was writing her *Life of Christina Rossetti*, and they were published in that volume.

*30 Torrington Square — W C.  
Tuesday 13th [1883]*

DEAR MR. GOSSE

I have the pleasure of announcing that I have completed the *Dante* article I am invited to offer the "Century" In a few days I shall venture to send it to you, counting on your kindly transmitting it to headquarters· but just for those few days I must keep it by me, until I can have it read by one whose opinion I value

Very sincerely your obliged

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

<sup>49</sup> Publisher.



30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
May 16. [1883]

MY DEAR MR. GOSSE

Allow me to acknowledge and thank you for not merely the cheque (receipt enclosed) but for the friendly hand recognisable thro' the whole transaction I feel myself most liberally paid, especially as so much of the bulk of my article accrues from quotation and should this occur to the "Century" magnates after all, you will permit me (please!) to rescue you from any unpleasant result of your courteous liberality by refunding somewhat Meanwhile I like my 20 guineas very much.

Very truly your obliged

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

I do not know what work was projected for which Christina offered the following information:

30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
February 5, 1885.

DEAR SIR

I readily answer your enquiries.

My first published volume was "Goblin Market and Other Poems" in 1862. This was followed in 1866 by "The Prince's Progress and other Poems" I mention *both* of these, because both for several years past have been out of print, and are now on sale in one inclusive volume which is always called "Poems" (1875) altho' the titlepage bears the name in full of the same two principal pieces. This inclusive volume underwent general revision including a few withdrawals and a few additions.

So far as I know the full list — not so very long! — of my books can be found either in the latest edition of *Men of the Time*, or (under my name) in the *British Museum Catalogue*. The last

published is "Letter and Spirit" 1883. if this is registered, all the preceding ones presumably are registered also

Perhaps it is not worth adding that my name appears amongst the writers of the "Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography" to which work I contributed some articles on Italian literary men, — and that recently the "Century" brought out a slight study of Dante which they had bespoken from me. I am in hopes too of getting one more book out before so very long, perhaps before your work sees the light but this is, of course, doubtful

If I can have the pleasure of helping you further, pray let me know

Sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

P S Before "Goblin Market" appeared some few things of mine came out in periodicals but I do not suppose this is of any moment tho' I reopen my letter to say so

Miss Ellen A. Proctor was engaged in parish work in Ratchliffe in 1886–1887, and on Monday nights she attended meetings of the Factory Girls' Club, London Street, which were under the special care of the vicar, the Rev. R. K. Arbuthnot. Christina took a great interest in the welfare of these young people, and she and Miss Proctor corresponded frequently on the subject. In 1890 Miss Proctor went to the Cape and lived in Wynberg, whence she returned in 1892

*30 Torrington Square — London — W.C*  
*Whitsun Tuesday. [1890]*

MY DEAR MISS PROCTOR

I hope you are progressing towards comfort and competence. Not, certainly, that what you announce is very brilliant as yet,

but it makes a delightful contrast with nothing at all! You are quite welcome to the little I have done for you, and should other letters arrive I will take care to forward them

I hope your health in general, and in particular your precious sight, may revive. Perhaps so hot a climate tries more northern constitutions, yet you might hardly wish yourself in the severe winter we have passed thro'. even now, after one or two delightful days, the temperature has retrograded

What a dreadful account you give of —. Poor thing, may she have grace to retrieve her lost ground and break off so ruinous a habit I fear the tendency is fearfully difficult to cope with, especially in women

I wonder what "blue plumbago"<sup>50</sup> is like perhaps I may have seen, but I do not identify it Surely it is not to be despised at your window tho' it may not vie with primroses As I no longer go to the country, I may say the country from time to time very graciously comes to me, for friends send me or bring me flowers, amongst which there have been primroses

With every good wish to you

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G ROSSETTI

Christina's friendship with Miss Henrietta Rintoul, daughter of the editor of the *Spectator*, was of long standing. In 1855, when William Rossetti was art critic for the paper, Christina included most affectionate messages to Henrietta in her letters to William<sup>51</sup> The "G P booklet" referred to in this letter means her earliest book of verses, printed by her grandfather, Gaetano Polidori.

<sup>50</sup> "The pride of Wynberg where all the hedges are composed of it" (Ellen A. Proctor, *A Brief Memoir of Christina G. Rossetti*, London, 1895).

<sup>51</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, pp. 24-25

30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
December 16 [1890]

MY DEAR HENRIETTA

I am very glad you can report yourself as *well* in this freezing cold but I fear you must be uncomfortable! *We* get on fairly. Aunt Eliza is happily sheltered from the brunt of the cold, but she has something of a cough and so needs a watchful eye. As to myself I have not been feeling quite at my best, but I fancy I had been somewhat imprudent, and as today I commence a prudent course very likely I shall regain my quondam high level. I dare say skaters and sliders are frisking merrily, and that is some comfort.

I venture to hope that the tremendous effort made to save the Barings credit may also guarantee South American bond holders from ruinous loss: you know which very dear Friend I have in my mind.<sup>52</sup>

Now for your "young friend" The dear G. P. booklet contained (substantially for many verbal alterations are presumable in *all* I quote as reprints)

- 1 The 2nd Sonnet of 2 grouped together as "A Portrait," which two originally were totally unconnected.
2. Vanity of Vanities, a Sonnet.
3. Gone for ever.

- 
- 1 Dreamland
  2. An End

first appeared in the "Germ," I feel convinced — I may say sure, but I fail to lay hands on my *Germ*.

Two volumes from Emily Faithfull's press contained

- 1 A Royal Princess
2. Dream Love. —

the former was in the Lancashire cotton famine collection, the

<sup>52</sup> I do not know who this was.

latter in "A Welcome" to Princess Alexandra on her marriage as P. of Wales.

I think the general reputation of authors is that they have no objection to call attention to their own works! In any and every case command

Your truly affectionate

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Christina's family pride and affection appear in the next letter.

*30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
September 26.*

DEAR SIR

I am happy to say I am a daughter of that Gabriele Rossetti who so truly loved his country and who after long years of exile died a patient Christian.

He successively occupied in London No. 38 Charlotte St, Portland Place, — No. 50 Do., — No. 38 Arlington St, Camden Town, — and (if I am not mistaken as to the number) No. 166 Albany St., Regent's Park His longest residence was in 50 Charlotte St, his death took place in the Albany St. house.

I do not think our English usage will allow of so lengthy an inscription being put up, our practice being rather to name the person, his occupation perhaps, and a date or two May I venture to call your attention to *line 2* of your quotation? Its rugged structure suggests the probable presence of some error, my Father's fine taste dictating a smooth and musical flow of verse. I have not the original before me for reference, but as a mere guess would propose that it may run

"Altro non manca a te che il sol di Roma."

Very sincerely yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

A most faithful friend, and one with whom she kept up a regular correspondence as long as she was able to write, was Frederic Shields. He and Gabriel had met about 1865, and their friendship continued until Gabriel's death, at which Shields was present. In May 1892 Christina was operated on for the removal of a cancerous growth, and I think the next letter must have been written that same summer.

*30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
Friday, July 15. [1892]*

DEAR MR. SHIELDS

Cordial thanks for your friendly response. I dare say I am gaining ground, but I am not yet strong, and I fear I am more deaf than I used to be, in which case any kind visitor may need patience more than heretofore. Still, I am now seeing callers.

If my book<sup>53</sup> commends itself to you I am truly pleased. All too late I discovered several grave mistakes (some my own, some I think the printer's) which had escaped me in what I endeavored to make a careful revision. I venture to enclose a list of all of real importance which I have yet observed: possibly you may like to mark them in your copy. When quite done with, would it trouble you to return the list to me? as I might send it to some one else to whom I gave an early copy. Since those first issued a slip of errata has been prepared and printed, so that I trust the book as now on sale exhibits fewer glaring imperfections.

Will you pardon an untidy letter? I am still weak enough to plead weakness as an excuse for not rewriting it.

Very truly yours

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

<sup>53</sup> *The Face of the Deep* (1892) On January 2, 1893, she wrote to William that she had received the second edition, "a corrected ed much to my satisfaction" (*The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 192) I have a copy of the first edition which she gave to Miss Rintoul, also with a manuscript list of errata, perhaps the same one she refers to below

Christina's last letter to Shields was written in September 1894. Mackenzie Bell says it was a short note expressing her thanks for his long friendship and ending with a passionate avowal of "personal humility."<sup>54</sup> Mrs Read, her nurse, quotes her as having said repeatedly in the last weeks "This illness has humbled me. I was so proud before." She, whose hold on life had seemed so tenuous, had lived to nurse through final illnesses her brother, her mother, and her three aunts. She had been proud, and justifiably so, that she had never been a burden, but had been the one to carry the burdens, that she had always maintained her little personal independence; and now for the first time she found herself forced to rely on the ministrations of another

She had all her life had a vein of sprightliness which continued for some time after she had taken to her bed in August 1894. (Perhaps it was this that had led her father to refer to her, in William's translation of his letter, as "our skittish Christina,"<sup>55</sup> an unlikely term, one would have thought.) However, she grew gradually more and more depressed as to her chances for salvation. One day she said to William: "How dreadful to be eternally wicked! for in hell you must be so eternally — not to speak of the matter of torments"<sup>56</sup> She thus awaited death with fear and apprehension for weeks, but on December twenty-ninth, while she was evidently engaged in silent prayer, according to the nurse, she gave one sigh and died perfectly peacefully.

<sup>54</sup> *Christina Rossetti*, p. 177

<sup>55</sup> W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti* (London, 1901), p. 120

<sup>56</sup> W. M. Rossetti, *Some Reminiscences*, II, 533







## XI

### WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI

WILLIAM ROSSETTI's relations with Gabriel and Christina are of peculiar interest, so earnest was he always in his endeavors to be of assistance to them, and so baffled by their vicissitudes of spirit and emotional conflicts. He is extremely matter-of-fact in his own accounts, and everyone seems to have accepted all that he did in much the same manner, with the result that he is sadly unappreciated. Burne-Jones told Graham Robertson<sup>1</sup> that when William Morris was trying to interest Dante Gabriel Rossetti in *Sigurd the Volsung*, Rossetti remained unsympathetic and, upon the entrance of Fafnir, remarked "I never cared much for all that stuff . . . How can one take a real interest in a man who has a dragon for a brother?" Morris thought this over in silence for a moment or two, and then, gazing fixedly at Rossetti, said "I'd much rather have a dragon for a brother than a bloody fool." This description was very far from fitting William, who was in fact a tower of strength to the whole family, one is unable to conceive what they would have done without him.

In 1845, at the early age of sixteen, he entered the Excise Office (called from 1849 onwards the Inland Revenue Office) at a wage of eighty pounds a year, all of which munificent sum he contributed to the Rossetti household. His father was half blind and incapacitated for work, Mrs Rossetti was teaching in one or two families, Maria was going out as an instructor of Italian, Gabriel and Christina were wholly dependent.

In 1850 William was fortunate enough to be appointed art critic to the *Spectator* at fifty pounds a year, and in 1853, just before his twenty-fourth birthday, he was promoted to a government post with a salary of two hundred and fifty pounds. He felt that he could now support the entire family in comparative com-

<sup>1</sup> *Time Was*, p. 88

fort, and on Lady Day, 1854, he installed his father, his mother, Maria, and Christina in a house at 45 Upper Albany Street, a few years later renumbered 166 Albany Street. Rossetti, senior, died soon after they were established, and Gabriel had not been actually an inmate of the household since about 1852,<sup>2</sup> although William and Aunt Charlotte Polidori continued to contribute to his support

In 1851 William had fallen in love. In *Some Reminiscences*<sup>3</sup> he disposed of the affair in a single paragraph, in spite of the fact that it seems to have been in progress over a period of some nine years. He proposed in 1856 and was accepted, his fiancée's parents opposed the marriage and, upon the failure of her father's health, the lady broke off the engagement, renewing it, however, a year later. Her father died in 1859 and her mother a year later, whereupon William's fiancée told him that she found herself unwilling to form any new ties. William writes that he was "unable to consider this second rupture of the engagement entirely reasonable"<sup>4</sup> This lady remains anonymous in his account, and no one else considered the matter worth mentioning

The family continued to occupy the house at 166 Albany Street until midsummer, 1867. In 1864 Aunt Margaret Polidori had been invited to join them, and she rented two rooms until her death in 1867.<sup>4</sup> She was "much affected with nervous tremor, and troubled by hysterical fits, in which she would fall into peals of long-continued quasi-laughter, which rang over the house — more like the vocal gymnastics of a laughing hyena than like anything else I know"<sup>5</sup> In 1867 William leased a larger house at 56 Euston Square, in which Aunt Eliza Polidori took over the second floor. She was a less disturbing tenant than Aunt Margaret. her only adventures had taken place in 1854, when she had

<sup>2</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 170. Before 1852 he had shared a number of studios but had continued more or less regularly to sleep at home

<sup>3</sup> I, 260

<sup>4</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 32

<sup>5</sup> In 1866 William suggested to Christina that if straitened means were an impediment (as they might well be) to her marriage with Cayley, they would be welcome to live under his fraternal roof rent-free (*The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 29)

accompanied Miss Nightingale to the Crimea, and when, after her return, she was called upon to give some evidence relating to her experiences in a London police court. She was designated on this occasion in the newspapers as "Miss Polly Dory."<sup>6</sup>

After the unhappy experience with his vacillating fiancée, William apparently did not venture to try his fate again until 1873, when he and Lucy Brown, the eldest daughter of Ford Madox Brown, became engaged. They were married in March of the following year, and William optimistically expected that the addition of a wife to the already teeming household at 56 Euston Square would be in no way disturbing.

Christina wrote to Gabriel on July 18, 1876, that "our Euston Sq home-party is broken up!"<sup>7</sup> and that she was evidently displeasing to Lucy. After a visit at All Saints Hospital, Eastbourne, with Mrs Rossetti and Maria, Christina wrote again to Gabriel in September 1876<sup>8</sup> that they (joined by Aunts Charlotte and Eliza) were moving to 30 Torrington Square. William was very much distressed over the turn of events and offered to contribute to the support of the new establishment, but Mrs. Rossetti felt that, with the assistance of her two sisters, they had sufficient means for living on a quiet scale. Thus at forty-seven William Rossetti, for the first time, was relieved of the burden he had borne for over thirty years. I have gone into this at some length, as it seems to me too lightly passed over and William too easily dismissed as a nonentity in a family of geniuses. His performances were quite as unusual and admirable in their line as were those of his relatives.

In 1854 William wrote the following letter:

45 Upper Albany St.,  
N W.

31 Oct.

Mr. W M. Rossetti begs to submit the accompanying tale and poems to the Editor of Fraser's Magazine.

<sup>6</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *His Family-Letters*, I, 32

<sup>7</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p 57

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p 60.

The tale is written by Mr. J. L. Tupper,<sup>9</sup> Milton Cottage, South Lambeth, S. — It is *ostensibly* directed to upholding the credibility of strange assertions upon good evidence, spite of a priori objections but its *real* drift is just the reverse — viz to push the evidence thesis ad absurdum, and so damage the argument. Mr. Rossetti conceives, however, that the interest of the tale to the general reader is *as* a tale, and independent of the under-purpose Tho' it takes a liberty with the Jesuits, there is no intention in it of polemics or bigotry

The poems are by Miss Christina G. Rossetti, at this address. If it is not the practice in Fraser's Magazine to pay for poetical contributions, Miss Rossetti begs to offer them on that understanding. She would like the signature "Christina G. R." to appear<sup>10</sup>

As Mr Rossetti acts in this matter only as the medium of transmission, he would beg that any communications on the subject may be addressed either to Mr Tupper and Miss Rossetti, or to him, as may be most convenient for the Editor.

Mr. Rossetti's own opinion, if he may be allowed to express it, is that both the tale and the poems are really good of their kind.

Among William's own literary labors about this time was a review of Thomas Keightley's *Poems of Milton* in the *Athenaeum*, for the seventeenth of September, 1859 I have read the review without learning what offended the Chevalier Jean Baptiste François Ernest de Chatelain, who had written in 1857 a translation of Gay's *Fables*, with a section devoted to *Beautés de la Poésie Anglaise*

<sup>9</sup> Tupper's father's firm undertook, in 1850, the printing of the *Germ*, in which several of John L. Tupper's poems appeared. He was by profession a sculptor

<sup>10</sup> I cannot find that *Fraser's* accepted any of these poems

45 Upper Albany St,  
NW.

31 Octr. 1859

SIR,

I regret that the simple matter-of-fact which I have stated in the Athenaeum [*sic*] should have produced such an effect upon you as your letter makes apparent. There was nothing offensive in my manner of stating the fact, and I can therefore only infer that the fact itself is one which you would wish to remain unknown.

The case is just as I have represented it. I have not read your book, and do not know for certain whether any claim to original discovery is professed therein. I *have* read Mr. Keightley's book, and do know that any such claim would be erroneous.

Without a particle of ill will towards you, either in the first instance, or now after receipt of your letter, I have the honour to remain

Your obedt. Servant,

W M. ROSSETTI

*A Monsieur*

*M. le Chevalier de Chatelain*

Notwithstanding the awkwardness of his domestic arrangements, it is apparent from the following letter to John La Farge <sup>22</sup> that William was engaged in bringing his brother's works to the attention of the distinguished people he met.

56 Euston Sq. NW.  
8 August [c. 1872]

DEAR MR. LAFARGE,

I must apologize to you for writing this note — for the forgetfulness wh. renders it necessary, and for its inhospitable purport.

I live in this house with my mother and a sister: and, when

<sup>22</sup> American artist

yesterday I asked you to give us the pleasure of your company at dinner after looking at any pictures etc by my brother, I had quite overlooked the fact that my mother leaves tomorrow morning for the country, while my sister is so great an invalid (permanently so, and just now particularly unwell)<sup>12</sup> that I cannot rely upon her being even *present* at the dinner-table. Under these circumstances, Madox Brown (whose house is very near mine) asks that, after you have looked at anything in my house, you along with myself will walk round to his, and there dine: and I am in hopes you will find yourself equally well suited by this arrangement, and will pardon anything in it that seems — and indeed *is* — out of the way.

If however anything interferes, you wd. perhaps be so good as to write to Brown *direct* (37 Fitzroy Sq. W.) and let him know I understand that you wd be at Euston Sq. about 5½, and Brown's dinner-hour is again 7.

Believe me

Very truly yours,

W. M. ROSSETTI

J. Lafarge Esq.

In 1868 William undertook some work for Dr. Furnivall and the Chaucer Society, which resulted in the publication in 1875 and 1883 of *Chaucer's Troylus and Cryseyde, Compared with Boccaccio's Filostrato, Translated by W M Rossetti*.<sup>13</sup>

56 Euston Sq.  
29 Jan'y. [1872?]

DEAR FURNIVALL,

I made some little delay in returning your Sandras, but did return it the other day, and no doubt you received it.

<sup>12</sup> In April 1871 Christina developed an exophthalmic bronchocele from which she suffered severely until 1873 Mrs Rossetti was perhaps at Kelmscott with Dante Gabriel

<sup>13</sup> W M Rossetti, *Some Reminiscences*, II, 399

You may like to know how my own Chaucer work stands. From the time when I began on Shelley (Novr./68) various things succeeded one another, very rarely allowing me so much as an evening for the Chaucer. But, since I returned at the end of Octr from my annual holiday, I took up the work with some continuity, and have wholly completed the translating of those parts of Boccaccio's poem wh were utilized by Chaucer. I am now making a summary (of course much less precise) of the parts *not* so utilized. This will probably be finished pretty soon and then I shall write a few — only a few — prefatory remarks, and the whole thing will be done. This might (so far as I can at present judge) be effected by the middle of March, if not earlier.<sup>14</sup>

Very truly yours,

W. M. ROSSETTI

William espoused the cause of Walt Whitman with unexpected enthusiasm. He read *Leaves of Grass* in 1856 and became a proselyte at once, in spite of a good deal of discouragement from Gabriel, who said that Whitman was "sublimated Tupper."<sup>15</sup> In 1868 William wrote an article in the *Chronicle* on Whitman, which, coming to the attention of Hotten, the publisher, led to William's making a selection of Whitman's poems for publication by that firm in the same year. At this time the poet was a poor man, in broken health, and a subscription was got up in the United Kingdom to buy his books, *Leaves of Grass* and *Two Rivulets*, Robert Buchanan, the attacker of the "fleshly school" and in particular of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was conspicuous in the movement. William did not care to act with him, so Buchanan eventually worked independently.

In the sixties Swinburne was as ardent an admirer of Whitman's as William Rossetti could wish. In 1866 he wrote to

<sup>14</sup> The work was completed in 1872 (*ibid*)

<sup>15</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 349



Houghton of the "great Walt," and as late as 1885 wrote that he retained a very cordial appreciation of his earlier work, but in 1887 he recanted completely.<sup>16</sup>

From the following letter it appears that Swinburne had been annoyed by some remarks of Whitman's about rhyme and verse.

*Somerset House*  
*5 April [1876]*

DEAR SWINBURNE,

I am ashamed to say that the *carte de visite* quite slipped my memory after I had written to you last. This morning I spoke about it to Lucy and she, with her usual boundless zeal for the baby, will I believe dispatch it to you straightway. I consider it *moderately* good.

The Blake exhibition *is* now open. may I suppose remain open till about the close of April. You can't go in by paying but you must I presume know many members of the Burlington Club, any one of whom wd. give you an admission. I ceased to belong to the Club (as possibly you remember) in Decr 1867, when they expelled Whistler.<sup>17</sup> Scott<sup>18</sup> also is now no longer a member.

I continue in active communication with Whitman. who is not "miserably poor" (Buchananice),<sup>19</sup> but will be extremely glad to have English book purchasing recruits beaten up. But for an uncertainty about the range of his editions and prices, I shd. now be already concocting a circular. wrote to him yesterday to clear up all this, and shall then proceed without delay.

I don't know the date of the Standard article: did not see it. The *Secularist* of 1 Ap showed (without further comment) subscriptions received to the amount of £1.15.6. The leading article

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, pp 162, 276

<sup>17</sup> William and Gabriel resigned when Whistler was expelled as a result of his quarrel with his brother-in-law, Seymour Haden

<sup>18</sup> William Bell Scott

<sup>19</sup> Robert Buchanan.

in the Daily News must (I am pretty sure) be dated 16 March. The Secularist exaggerated the hostility of this article to Wh. it was in fact a moderate presentment of the pro and contra of the question, as viewed by a person outside the circle of Whitmanic enthusiasm. The writer was Justin McCarthy — a very pleasant good and able man I always find him. The D. N. did say that it couldn't receive Wh. subscriptions — wh. I regretted somewhat, but I don't know that it was meant with any particular animus.

I did see something of Wh's about verse, rhyme, etc. perceived it to be onesided and declamatory, but had not remembered in it any such peculiar atrocity as you denounce.

Have not communicated with O'Grady <sup>20</sup> — Dowden <sup>21</sup> is more serviceable for looking-up Irishmen but will send him circulars etc. as they come out. Have not *seen* his article on Wh.

You will find Hueffer's <sup>22</sup> Encyd. Brit. article on Boccaccio *peculiarly* good (if you agree with me). I also enjoyed his Macmillan paper much. I am myself working in this Encyd. on biographies of artists now.

I lately became a subscriber to the Secularist (Lucy has a liking for it). Have not read it closely, but consider it up to a certain fair literary level. The things that interest me in it are the (decidedly numerous) contributions of B. V. — This writer is Jas. Thomson, author of that celebrated poem (I suppose you must have read or heard of it) The City of Dreadful Night — also (quite as good) Weddah and Om el Bonain, an oriental legend of passion. I remember you abused him to me once, simply on the ground that he had sent me some Shelley notes and emendations — and singularly good these are, as I who know them know. I regard him as a very remarkable genius. His verses (those I read)

<sup>20</sup> Standish O'Grady, 1846-1928

<sup>21</sup> Edward Dowden, 1843-1913

<sup>22</sup> Franz Hueffer

in the Secularist appear to be comparative trifles, yet with a certain cachet too

I also have hitherto remained ignorant of Lecomte de Lisle, after what you say, I must remove from myself that stigma at the very earliest opportunity. I was sorry to hear some little while ago that Victor Hugo is blameably jealous of L de L, and that the (as P. says) quite irrefragable fact that L has made a stupendous translation of *Æschylas* [*sic*] can never be mentioned in Hugo's presence.

Your affectionate

W. M. ROSSETTI

I saw in the Examiner a most jolly piece of chaff of yours about the Shakespeare Socy. — read it at Brown's, but not *through*. Shall buy the No

After Gabriel's death in the spring of 1882, William and Theodore Watts (Dunton) formed a project to get out a joint volume of his letters with a memoir.<sup>23</sup> Christina and Mrs. Rossetti turned over their letters to William for publication. Christina, according to her habit, had destroyed all except a few of those addressed to herself<sup>24</sup>

7 Nov/82<sup>25</sup>

MY DEAR WILLIAM

Yesterday Mamma completed her look-thro' of Gabriel's letters. The accompanying parcel makes up the entire number she offers you to choose from (marked here and there with the

<sup>23</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 227. This was never put through

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 212

<sup>25</sup> Dated in pencil by W. M. Rossetti, with a note in his hand-writing: "C. G. R. refers to letters by D. G. Rossetti, which got publ. by me in a vol. 1895"

monitory blue pencil), and of these she feels sure several are unavailable. Perhaps however you will like for your own sake to read them. As soon as your selection is made, please in 2 distinct parcels return to her the *useful* and the *useless*: the latter she will treasure; of the former she desires me to say I am going "kindly" to make the printer's copy, so that the dear sheets with their eliminated passages need not come under a strange eye. I am a fairly quick and diligent scribe, so do not take fright at your prospect.

Her and my love to you and yours,

C. G. R.

William was depended on for errands, even of a quasi-religious nature, though why Christina should have preferred the agnostic William's selection of a Bible is somewhat mysterious.

[*After 1890*]

MY DEAR WILLIAM

In talking the other day I never recollected to speak of little Ursula's<sup>26</sup> Bible. If without its being troublesome you could and would oblige me by procuring it at the SPCK shop, Northumberland Avenue, I should be much pleased. I want a *good print* one with references and Apocrypha, really well bound, and for such a child should prefer a cheerful binding (*red* for instance) if there is a choice, but this is of no consequence. So when (D.V.) I see you next Wednesday if you have not seen about it I will set you free from the request: for although I should in itself prefer your selection, I can get the Bible otherwise.<sup>27</sup>

All well here both with Aunt E. and self, — quite as well as

<sup>26</sup> Child of the George Hakes, and C. G. R.'s goddaughter

<sup>27</sup> This paragraph quoted by Mackenzie Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p. 155

need be wished. I hope Lucy and the 4 thrive, and I much wish  
that your dear self may be better both in looks and feelings

Always your affectionate sister

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

*30 Torrington Square — W C.*

*Wednesday afternoon*

I am sending you an obvious Hobby Horse.<sup>28</sup>

William assumed the duties of literary executor after Gabriel's death and fulfilled them faithfully. They brought him work of a kind that suited him, and some little money.

*5 Endsleigh Gardens N W.*

*24 June/86*

DEAR WATTS,

I have to recur to you as usual for some advice.

The enclosed letter from Ellis & Scrutton relates to the fact that Waddington asked for permission to insert, in a volume of translated sonnets wh. he proposes to bring out, a dozen or so of the sonnets translated by Gabriel from the Italian. I told W. that I had no objection to his doing so when in Octr or Novr next I shall become owner of the copyright of that book as forming part of G's Collected Works. I also afterwards told him that, spite of my assent as above, it *might* be that E. & S wd retain some controlling power, in virtue of their ownership of the unsold stock of the old edition You see that now E & S are opposed to *my assenting in any way*, and they refer me to a clause in the agreement wh. says that I am to do nothing to damage their

<sup>28</sup> Contribution for the periodical called by this name

interests in the Collected Works, &c. Now I don't want to damage their interests, nor do I think that my assent (relating to the Collected Works) wd. do so. & I think that I, as owner of the copyright ought not to be pulled up extremely short in such a point, under that clause about their interests. — Wd you keep me straight

It shd be understood that I really don't care a button whether the sonnets do or do not appear in Waddington's book

The other letter relates to a proposed French translation of Gabriel's Poems I presume that I as owner of the copyright can decide this question, & that something ought in reason to be paid to me. 'What' Also do you or does Swinburne know anything about Charles Morice? I seem to have heard his name, but cd. say no more than that

I wish at any convenient moment you wd. tell Swinburne that I thank him heartily for his vol. of Miscellanies — & shall write to him as soon as leisure (wh. is specially scant with me just now) shall allow me to read the Landor article. Other articles, preceding that one, I have read (or looked thro') already.

Please let me have back both enclosures in due course

Yours,

W. M. ROSSETTI

Later in the year he wrote to Roberts Brothers in Boston.

*5 Endsleigh Gardens.  
N W.*

*London  
2 Octr /86.*

DEAR SIRS,

As you were the Publishers of more than one American edition of the poems of my late brother Dante G Rossetti, I think it

right to address you, in preference to any other American Publishers, on the following matter. As owner of the copyright in my brother's works, I have entered into an agreement with Messrs Ellis and Scrutton, 29 New Bond St, London, W. to publish my brother's Complete Works, verse and prose, in 2 vols — They will be printed from stereotype plates, the property of Messrs E. and S; and will contain (1) the vol Poems of 1881, (2) the vol Ballads and Sonnets, (3) the vol Dante and his Circle, and (4) a not inconsiderable quantity of verse, and more especially of prose, some of it printed heretofore in various outlying forms, and much of it not printed at all, also (5) a Preface and Notes written by me The book is (according to the agreement) to be published not later than 30 Novr. ensuing I fancy however that it may get delayed some few weeks beyond that date

Wd. you kindly inform me at your early convenience whether you wd. be disposed to enter into any arrangement with a view to bringing out an American issue of the Collected Works If so, it shd be understood that I alone am owner of the copyright while Messrs. E. and S alone are owners of the stereotype plates. I had till recently understood that in this state of the facts it lay with Messrs E and S, rather than myself, to take the initiative as to any prospect of an American issue but they inform me that they regard the matter in the opposite light, having only to say on their own account that, if their stereotype plates are required for reprinting abroad, they wd. of course expect to be remunerated. But for this uncertainty, I shd. before now have brought the matter to your notice.

Yours very faithfully,

W. M. ROSSETTI

*Messrs. Roberts Bros.*

Mrs. Rossetti, senior, died in 1886, and Christina and William were drawn together more than ever.

[1887-1890]

MY DEAR WILLIAM

My enclosure explains itself. If there is a photo. of a good portrait of our Mother — *not* the pen and ink one, *nor* the one with me — please send to Golde Moeller<sup>29</sup> a copy. Surely one which belongs to Aunt C. is amongst your negatives, yet I cannot find it in my set consequently I could not for the moment tell G. M. positively whether there is such an one on sale.

Aunt Eliza appears somewhat better, Aunt Charlotte much as usual.

Some day I want you to tell me whether accuracy requires a difference of pronunciation between *prophecy* and *prophesy*, giving a *short* final “y” to the substantive and a *long* to the verb. I hear the distinction made now, but remember nothing of the sort in my early days.

Your affec. sister

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

In 1887 William's family were in San Remo, and when he started off to join them he tried to induce Christina to go with him. In February she wrote that she might better have done so, as she found herself ordered to Torquay by her doctor.<sup>30</sup> She had secured two rooms at “Mrs Harvey's” for a guinea a week, and she writes that she is “assured of their respectability”

<sup>29</sup> Daughter of the Heimanns

<sup>30</sup> *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 160



2 *Beechwood*

*Abbey Road — Torquay.*

*March 10. 1887*

MY DEAR WILLIAM

Glad I am to know that you are safe at home again, tho' not glad that your enjoyable days with Lucy and the elders are ended Well! I hope it may not now be so very long before *home* gathers round you again, all the brighter if Lucy has gained health and strength for English severities I enclose a Bournemouth address sent for Lucy by Sarah Austin who heard of the Bournemouth plan thro' (not directly from) Miss Burroughs.<sup>31</sup> but surely "Merchistoune" is an address already familiar to you However, I do my part by sending it *you*, as I am not sure where best to direct it to Lucy herself.

I fully expect to go home next Tuesday, so after that day your calling will give me too the satisfaction of seeing you.

Do you recollect a certain Herbert Coleridge<sup>32</sup> whom you charmed years ago by a bout of Dictionary work? His sister called on me one afternoon. She resides at Torquay, and heard of my temporary quarters from Mrs Townsend<sup>33</sup> who I am happy to say was not at Hyères visited by the awful earthquake<sup>34</sup> I hope Isabella and her Lionel<sup>35</sup> are safe I have not heard of them, nor of poor Oliviere<sup>36</sup> at Nice. Weather here continues

<sup>31</sup> The Austins and the Burrowses (not "Burroughs") were distant relatives of Mrs Rossetti, senior (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 30) W M R met Miss Burrows at San Remo

<sup>32</sup> Coleridge acted as editor for the preliminary work of the Philological Society on the *New English Dictionary* (W M Rossetti, *Some Reminiscences*, II, 301)

<sup>33</sup> Mrs Townsend I have not identified

<sup>34</sup> A very severe and widespread earthquake took place on the Riviera, February 25, 1887

<sup>35</sup> Mrs Isabella Pietrocolo-Rossetti married Mr Lionel Cole in August 1884 Her first husband, Teodorico, died in June 1883

<sup>36</sup> "Dr Oliviere, a cultivated Italian much afflicted by ill health and other troubles" (Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, p 108) See *ante*, p 168.

you will have to pardon  
lodging house deficiencies  
(I or unimpaired character)  
please.

Lucy Brown told us some-  
thing about Grace -  
and I want to hear more  
about my Cordelia

1 North Cottage - Sources Mount  
Hampstead

24th

My dear Mr. Hermann

I pray for a day for  
you and Henriette to come  
here with us. Rather before  
than after 2 o'clock  
of Thursday. Thank you for  
all the affection you and  
your family have shown me.  
I am so sorry for your letter as

I am still weak  
Always your loving  
Christina S. Rossetti

LETTER FROM CHRISTINA ROSSETTI TO MRS. HEIMANN

(Written July 24, 1872, and showing the effect of Christina's illness on her handwriting)



cold, tho' perhaps with mitigated sharpness· it seems to be quite true, what I was told, that March is not the month for Torquay.

Always your affec sister

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

The George Hakes have a little son. And *it is said* that my small Ursula on seeing him said "Guy Guy."<sup>37</sup>

Lucy Rossetti was very ill in April 1893, in October she went to Italy but grew steadily worse, and died there the following April.

[*Spring 1893*]

30 Torrington Square — W.C.  
Tuesday

MY DEAR LUCY

I think of you though I do not see you. I wonder whether this return of wintriness is trying you sorely — I hope not, but life is full of anxieties. How charming it will be if before long weather and a rally on your part enable you to try change of air and scene, and if such a change is blessed to us all by a renewal of your health and strength. Perhaps, however, you are already much better than I am giving you credit for. may it be so!

As yet I have not succeeded in providing a successor for our good Harriett,<sup>38</sup> but I am trying in various directions. This unsettled state keeps me much at home, and on the alert to seize any opening. Nurse Annie<sup>39</sup> is of course still on duty. At last, but not till after the funeral — which took place a week ago to-day — I told Aunt Eliza of Harriett's death: she bore it very

<sup>37</sup> Postscript quoted by Bell, p. 155

<sup>38</sup> A maid (*The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 161)

<sup>39</sup> Annie Jackson was Mrs Rossetti's nurse at the time of her death, and C G R wrote of her that she "has been our true friend, helper and comfort" (*ibid*, p. 233, see also p. 153). She was called in on various occasions

well, and I really think the cessation of what was otherwise unaccountable may have relieved her, though she has evidently been grieved. George Catchpole<sup>40</sup> has left at last, as it was no longer suitable to give the extra trouble in the household.

Excuse a dismal letter, but I like you to know about us. Aunt Eliza keeps very well, all considered, and I fluctuate, but neither far above nor far below my level. Love to William and the Four from

Your affectionate sister

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

And here at the very end of Christina's life, William takes up the pen to write a final word on her behalf

*3 St Edmund's Terrace  
Regent's Park, N W  
6 Novr./94.*

MY DEAR MADAM,

My sister is so dangerously ill that she can take no active part in this matter about her old poem "Repining":<sup>41</sup> but I have spoken to her about it, and her impression is that the poem is not good enough to be reprinted. She left the actual decision to me. Yesterday I re-read the poem for the express purpose of judging — and I agree with my sister. Certainly the poem is not the work of a fool, nor yet of a writer wholly inexperienced; but it looks like what it is, a very *juvenile* production. My sister has advisedly excluded it from her volumes, and it seems still less well adapted to figure in a Selection — in wh. one naturally expects to find performances above, and not below, a writer's average.

<sup>40</sup> Sarah Catchpole had been a servant in the family. I assume George was a relative of hers (*The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 233).

<sup>41</sup> Published in the *Germ*, March 1850, and not reprinted until the edition of her collected works edited by W. M. Rossetti, 1904.

Regretting any disappointment wh this decision may possibly  
cause you, I am, Dear Madam,

Very faithfully yours,

WM M ROSSETTI

*Miss Mary Christie*

William was always modest about his own achievements, but he was quite naturally pleased when they were noticed, as he shows in the following letters to Gleeson White and to Samuel Waddington.

*5 Endsleigh Gardens*

*N.W.*

*24 May/87.*

DEAR SIR,

I wd. have replied sooner to your letter of the 17th but for numerous occupations

I had not till now any knowledge of the reply made by Messrs. Ellis and Elvey to your request regarding my brother's poems <sup>42</sup> They certainly have a right to exercise some option in the matter, and I shd regret to raise any further question with them about it.

As to poems of my own, I have never ventured to put myself seriously forward as entitled to rank as a poet among poets the deservings of my brother and my sister in that line having always (in my own opinion as well as in that of others) thrown any faculty of mine into the shade Still some verse of mine has been published from time to time. I may mention the following.

1. The only narrative poem of mine is a longish blank-verse composition, "Mrs. Holmes Grey," wh. was published in "The Broadway" magazine in 1868, and reproduced in "The Broadway Annual" soon afterwards. It is a performance, dated 1849,

<sup>42</sup> White was getting together the poems for his anthology, *Ballades and Rondeaux* (London, 1887) No Rossetti poems were included

of a very peculiar kind in the realistic direction I don't possess any disposable copy of it

2. There are sonnets of mine (I suppose 3 altogether) in the Sonnet-collections of Hall Caine (Stock), and of Wm. Sharp (Scott) The one named "Democracy Downtrodden" seems to be generally accepted as my best performance in verse

3. 6 printed sonnets are enclosed printed thus, but never published. The dates wh are printed are dates apposite to the subject-matter — not dates of composition

If you wd like to use any one or more of the compositions wh. I have set forth under Nos 1, 2, and 3, I am quite willing that this shd be done The question of copyright in No 1 wd, I suppose, follow the usual rule of copyright in compositions paid for by a magazine Perhaps you wd in due course let me know your decision

Yours very truly

WM. ROSSETTI

*3 St. Edmund's Terrace  
Regent's Park, N W.  
8 March/[190]7*

DEAR MR WADDINGTON,

I feel much indebted to you for your kind thought in sending me your volume of Sonnets.<sup>43</sup> Have now made a more detailed acquaintance with them than I had before, and find in them a pervading tone of serious thought and of dignity, as well as executive accomplishment I may perhaps take it upon me to say that, among those wh I think most fully successful, are

To-day, Ad Matrem, Soul and Body, What Gosepl, On the Summit, Human, and Spiritual Twilight

I observe that every now and then you prolong into the sextett

<sup>43</sup> *Sonnets*, published in December 1906

a rhyme wh. begins in the octave. For this you wd. have *some* precedent, but not I suppose among the purists of the sonnet-form. A composition of 4 feet to a line is what I do not regard as a sonnet. This does not mean that it is not a perfectly legitimate form of verse.

I have delayed acknowledging your book because I wanted to reciprocate it with a booklet of my own, named *Democratic Sonnets*:<sup>44</sup> this was published something like a fortnight ago, but I am only now in possession of some copies. I shall post one to you along with the present letter.

You will find in it the Sonnet on wh. you bestow such generous praise, now named *Hungary and Europe*. It is curious that this small piece shd. have figured under no less than 4 titles. I remember composing it as I was walking home in Octr. 1849 from my office, the Excise Office in Old Broad St. It was consequent upon the collapse of the Hungarian insurrectionary war against Austria, and (in a general sense) of the revolutionary movements throughout Europe. I then called it "For the General Oppression of the Better by the Worse Cause, Octr. 1849." When it came to be published in *The Germ*, the persons then responsible for the cost of that decedent magazine, the Printing-firm, were nervous as to what other people's opinions might be, and they got me to call it "The Evil under the Sun." When it came into one or two anthologies I thought a very generalized title the most suitable, and it was named "Democracy Downtrodden." Now in my present series it gets the title wh. exhibits its immediate motive.

Excuse these perhaps too personal details, and believe me

Very truly yours,

W. M. ROSSETTI

<sup>44</sup> D. G. Rossetti had been seriously alarmed in 1881 by William's authorship of these sonnets, and wrote both to him and to his wife to protest (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, II, 373 ff.).



Here is evidence that William was suppressing something about Christina.

*St Edmund's Terrace  
Regent's Park, N.W.  
29 July/98.*

DEAR MR. COLLES,<sup>45</sup>

I have now done with this article of "Christina Rossetti," and have the pleasure of replacing it in your hands

From our previous correspondence I infer that the first thing you will do with it is to offer it to Mr. Mackenzie Bell, at some suitable price. He, if he likes, can publish it in any form he pleases — i e, publish those passages wh. I have not cancelled. Of the cancelled passages, the great majority are so uninteresting that, on literary grounds, they ought not to be published. but, if it shd. so happen that B likes to print some of the sentences here and there, I have no great objection — the responsibility being his, not mine. There are however a few short passages wh. I have excluded not because they are trivial but because they glance at circumstances wh I don't choose to get into print. Bell wd be able to see which these are, and cd. consult me if needed

My Prefatory Remarks are I think quite to the purpose. and, if the article were published in the ordinary way — e g, in a magazine — I shd stipulate for having those Remarks included. If Bell were to buy the item, it is not clear to me whether he cd. or cd. not utilize the Remarks: he is welcome to do so as far as I am concerned, and had at any rate better see them.

Yours very truly,

W M ROSSETTI

<sup>45</sup> William Morris Colles was the founder and managing director of the Authors' Syndicate

William was able to speak his mind when the occasion arose, as he does in the following letter to Sir William Robertson Nicoll.<sup>46</sup>

3 St Edmunds Terrace  
Regent's Park. NW.

3 May/99

DEAR SIR,

You may perhaps be rather surprised to see a letter coming from me. The reason is that Mr. Watts-Dunton told me yesterday that Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton wd. like to consider for publication something written or edited by me, and he added that you are the Literary Adviser of the Firm. In what I proceed to say I do not profess to be minutely accurate in every detail. I write from recollection

Early in /96, when I brought out the "New Poems" of Christina Rossetti, there was a hostile critique — hostile at least to me — in the *British Weekly*, signed Claudius Clear and I was informed that Claudius Clear is generally, if not always, yourself. Some strictures in that critique were correct — others not so. Some time afterwards (I suppose in the same publication, and apropos of Mackenzie Bell's book about Christina) there was another article, signed also I think Claudius Clear, saying that my memoir of Dante Rossetti, published in /95, was so bad that the *Athenaeum* had refused to review it. This was a gratuitous assumption, and (as it happens) a false one. I know the facts, wh. are quite different.<sup>47</sup> Towards the same time, say Jany /98, I received a civil letter from some one on the staff of the *Bookman*, saying that you, as its Editor, wd. thank me to allow some Interviewer to write about me in that paper: I, in equally civil terms, declined. Immediately afterwards there appeared in the *Bookman* a review of Bell's book, reflecting severely upon me. I leave

<sup>46</sup> Sir William Robertson Nicoll wrote some hundreds of letters to the *British Weekly* under the general title, "The Correspondence of Claudius Clear"

<sup>47</sup> For the explanation see W M R's *Some Reminiscences*, II, 557-558

you to judge whether I considered that a handsome and creditable transaction or not <sup>48</sup>

If you care to reply to this letter, and to reply in terms suited to remove the impression that any MS. of mine passing thro' your hands wd be treated in a spirit of detraction — or else showing that such a MS offered to Messrs Hodder and Stoughton wd. not pass thro' your hands at all — I am willing to consider the question put before me by Mr Watts-Dunton If not, not

I have some things (already entrusted to a Syndicate with a view to publication) wh I wish to bring out, and I shd in the abstract not have any more objection to Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton than to any other Firm. Some of these things are in my opinion decidedly interesting, and I fancy that there are other people who wd think the same

Allow me to remain,

Dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

WM. M ROSSETTI

I shd. have added that I wd. not entertain any suggestion to alter, curtail, etc. any of the writings in question. All that Messrs Hodder and Stoughton wd. have to do wd be to accept them as they stand, if they like, or to reject them, if they prefer.

I do not know to whom the following note was written, or why there should have been a question of printing a letter of William's:

*3 St Edmund's Terrace  
Regent's Park, N W.  
23 Novr /[190]1.*

DEAR SIR,

What I wrote to you a few days ago was merely intended as a private letter, and I beg that you will so consider it unless I finally express a contrary view.

<sup>48</sup> Nicoll was associated with A St John Adcock in the editorship of the *Bookman*

I am never ashamed of my own opinions, and therefore I shd. not in the abstract object to seeing them in print As to that letter however I cd. not speak distinctly, unless I were first to see it again. Don't remember its diction etc.

I shd like also to know what (if any) is the form in wh you wd like to publish the letter.

Yours very truly  
W M ROSSETTI

In 1901 Sands and Company published William's translation of his father's autobiography.

*3 St Edmund's Terrace  
Regent's Park, N.W.  
28 Feby. 1901.*

DEAR MR. METCALFE,

I have the pleasure of returning this agreement signed — and of thanking you at the same time for the interest and pains wh. you have taken in the matter.

As to the proposed price of '7/6.' I need only say that I recognize the Publishers as the proper authority for settling such a question; but to me it appears to be somewhat beyond the amount wh. (so far as I can foresee the size and appearance of the volume) might seem reasonable to intending purchasers. If illustrations were wanted, I cd. certainly furnish *some* wh. wd be not a little appropriate.<sup>49</sup>

The type etc of the specimen-pages appear to me quite suitable. according to my own taste, the head-line wd look better if printed in capitals.<sup>50</sup>

I shd. be much pleased to meet Mr. Sands at some convenient

<sup>49</sup> The book was published in a limited edition of 1,000 copies at 7s. 6d. and contained six illustrations

<sup>50</sup> This was done

time, and talk over any details I cd probably keep *any* appointment wh you might find it convenient to make

I may add a remark upon clause 10 of the Agreement as to "Continental Rights" In this country the interest attaching to my Father is chiefly that he was the parent of Dante and Christina Rossetti but in his own country — Italy, and more especially its Neopolitan region — there is a very considerable interest in *himself*, as a poet, patriot, and Dante scholar Possibly Mr. Sands might find it practicable to arrange with some Italian Publisher for bringing out an Italian edition of the book In that case the verses comprised in the volume wd of course be my Father's own original verses, instead of my translation of them, and thus the Italian edition wd in fact be a record considerably superior to the English one I wd gladly cooperate in any such plan, if found feasible by Mr. Sands

Very truly yours,  
W. M. ROSSETTI

The article spoken of in the next letter sounds most interesting, but I do not think it has ever been printed

*3 St. Edmund's Terrace  
Regent's Park, N W.  
3 April/6.*

DEAR MR. COLLES,

I have lately been doing another small affair connected with my Brother. He made a large number of pencil-notes in a book by W. B. Scott — Memoir of David Scott (Brother of W. B.) a Scotch historical and ideal painter, whose work my Brother admired not a little but with many reservations. The notes relate in large measure to leading painters — Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, etc, as well as to D. Scott. I have now extracted from the

Memoir in question the passages annotated by my Brother, along with his remarks, wh. are often of an offhand sarcastic character, and have added some explanatory etc. observations of my own. The *essence* of the article is those notes by my Brother. The article makes 20 pages of my MS — say 11 or 12 in an ordinary magazine

I cd at any time send you the MS, if you think you cd. probably find a magazine etc. to publish it

I hardly suppose that one of the *ordinary* magazines — say Macmillan or Cornhill — wd take it The one wh. seems to me most probable is perhaps the Burlington I may mention however that in 1903 I was invited by the then (query now?) Editor of the Burlington <sup>51</sup> to write them an article, for wh he undertook to pay liberally I wrote it, and it was published,<sup>52</sup> but never received a penny This is chiefly because the magazine got into straits, and some legal liquidation ensued but even apart from this my usage was somewhat shabby. I therefore don't particularly *want* the Burlington on the present occasion, but wd. not refuse to treat with it if you find it the best.

Yours very truly

W. M. ROSSETTI

In 1903 William had finished writing *Some Reminiscences*, he was then seventy-four years old, and he must have felt that the end could not be far off. He had ahead of him, however, many more years, and his death did not take place until 1919.

Mrs. Rossetti, senior, remains a rather shadowy figure for the most part, but William has given us one remark of hers which,

<sup>51</sup> In 1903 the editor was R E Bell, who was joined in 1904 by C J Holmes In 1906 R E Bell retired

<sup>52</sup> "Dante Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal with facsimiles of five unpublished drawings by Dante Rossetti in the collection of Mr Harold Hartley," *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, I, 273-295 (May 1903)

although he does not apply it to himself, seems especially fitting to close a chapter on the member of the family who certainly showed the most outstanding common sense. "I always had a passion for intellect, and my wish was that my husband should be distinguished for intellect, and my children too. I have had my wish, and I now wish that there were a little less intellect in the family, so as to allow for a little more common sense." <sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family-Letters*, I, 22

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